DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 426 802 PS 027 294

AUTHOR	Holliday, Albert E., Ed.; Holliday, Joan M., Ed.
TITLE	The Journal of Educational Relations, 1998.
INSTITUTION	Educational Communication Center, Camp Hill, PA.
ISSN	ISSN-0741-3653
PUB DATE	1998-00-00
NOTE	165p.; For 1997 edition, see ED 423 981.
AVAILABLE FROM	Educational Communication Center, Box 657, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657; Tel: 800-537-2624 (Toll Free), Tel: 717-761-6620 (Individual rate, $48 per year, single copy, $15; library rate, $60 per year, single copy, $20; add $4 for subscriptions outside the United States; payment must be in U.S. funds).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	Journal of Educational Relations; v19 n1-4 1998
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Administrators; Charter Schools; Educational Change; Educational Environment; Educational Finance; Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Family School Relationship; Interprofessional Relationship; Principals; Program Descriptions; Public Relations; *School Administration; *School Community Relationship; Teacher Student Relationship; Teachers; Teaching (Occupation)

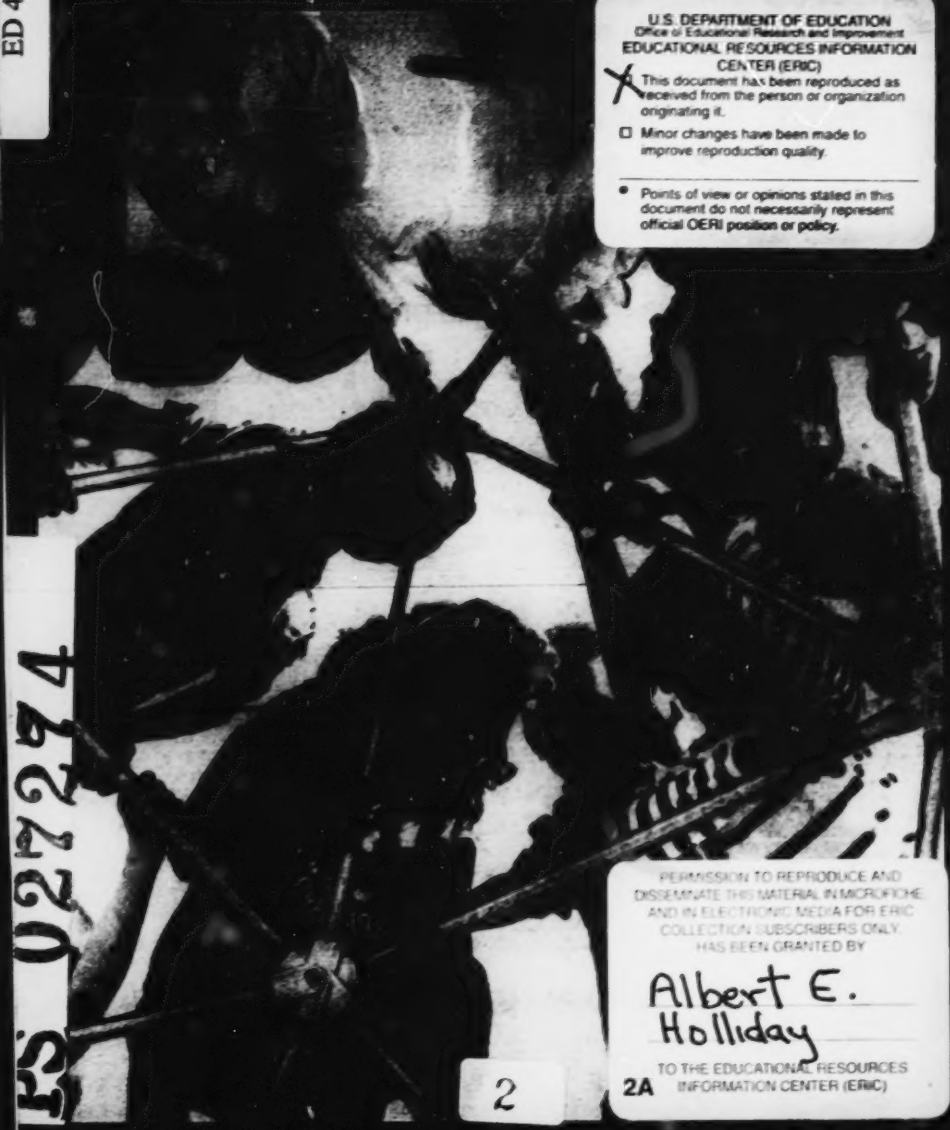
ABSTRACT

This document consists of the four 1998 issues of the "Journal of Educational Relations," published quarterly to promote student achievement through positive school-home-community relationships. Articles in the first issue include: "Policy Changes May Help Organizers of Charter Schools Meet Expectations" (Alex Medler); "Make Friends Before We Need Them: Operating a Key Communicator Program" (Martha Bruckner); and "Mission Statements" (John Koehn). Articles in the second issue include: "Are You Ready for a Referendum?" (Debi Edmund); and "Communication in Principalship" (Theodore Kowalski). Articles in the third issue include: "The Norwalk Mentor Program" (Susan Weinberger); "Enhance Your Board's Effectiveness Through Self-Evaluation" (Kathie Rozovicks); and "What Schools Are Expected to Do" (David Gilman). Articles in the fourth issue include: "Community Education" (Larry Decker); "School Climate has a Major Impact on School Improvement" (M. Scott Norton); and "Conduct a Climate Audit" (Jim Ellsberry). Each issue also contains a teaching or administrative case study and response, book reviews, and articles in which educators share insights regarding improvements in school-community relations. (KB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

The Journal of Educational RELATIONS

ED 426 802



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Albert E. Holliday

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

ES 027274

2

Promoting student achievement through positive school-home-community relationships Vol. 19, No. 1, 1st Quarter 1998

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

What is Your Mission Statement?

John Koehn's article in this issue was on my mind as I prepared to make a presentation before the Pennsylvania NSPRA chapter early this year. I asked attendees, in a written survey form, if they had adopted a mission statement for their school systems, and many of them said yes.

We'd like to see your district's mission statement, either the one you already have or the one you will write after reading John's article. We'll feature a selection of them in the **Journal** soon.

We Have Our Own Statement

Below is the new mission statement for this publication.

Our publication's purpose is to enhance student achievement and staff accomplishment. We seek to do this by stimulating those who operate schools to communicate and build relationships among all people in the greater school community.

We invite K-12 communicators, administrators and higher education professors to share their insights and knowledge in the areas of school public relations, human relations and communication in these pages.

And Send Us a Copy of Your PR PRogram Description

At the PennSPRA symposium, one person told me she was having difficulty locating sample copies of public relations program descriptions. She was unsuccessful in obtaining PR policy statements, PR people job descriptions and overviews of PR programs.

We would like to have you *send us* your organization's:

•PR policy statement, and/or

•Job descriptions of people doing PR work, and/or

•Overview of description of the services and activities in your PR or school-community relation program.

You do not need to have all three of these items. Send us one or two if that is what is available. And indicate if your district is *urban, suburban, small city/community* or *rural*. We'll have an article on this topic soon.

Key Communicators Covered Again

Martha Bruckner of the University of Nebraska provides valuable how-tos regarding a key communicators project in this issue.

We have covered this topic several times in recent years. If your district officials have not established such a project, her comments should be helpful.

Don Bagin of Glassboro (now Rowan University) has been identified with this concept as it is applied in education circles. He tells how, in a sidebar to Dr. Bruckner's article, he came to start using the term more than 30 years ago.

Al Holliday

Al Holliday
Editor-Publisher

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Vol. 19, No. 1
1st Quarter 1998

IFC **Editor's Column**

4 **Horoscope Forecasts for Education Writers.** *By Ben Brodinsky.*

6 **Make Friends Before We Need Them**—Operating a Key Communicator Program. *By Martha Bruckner.*

15 **Policy Changes May Help Organizers of Charter Schools Meet Expectations.** *By Alex Medler.*

18 **Mission Statements:** Properly developed statements can affect staff behavior. *By John J. Koehn.*

21 **Communication Commentary** *By Editor Albert E. Holliday*

25 **Case Study—A Battle of Textbooks Vs. Computer Technology.** *By Jim Izat.*

30 **Case Study Response—Pave the Way to a Successful Meeting.** *By Olga V. Garcia.*

32 **Book Reviews:** Organizational change, ways to make empowerment work, handbook for parent involvement, finding a common ground for successful change, the pluses of life-fulfilling work for employees, creating super special reports, ethical issues from a PR perspective and how to convert research findings to readable language.

IBC **Contributor Guidelines**

BC **Listen Up!** A Two-Minute PR Drill. *By Al Holliday.*

Cover photo by
Robert Finken
Richmond, VA

Subscription Service:
questions,
renewals,
new orders,
change of address,
Call toll-free:
800-537-2624.
Outside U.S.
(717) 766-0574
EDITORIAL CALL:
(717) 761-6620

RELATIONS-The Journal of Educational Relations—ISSN 0741-3653
Editor-in-chief: Albert E. Holliday
Associate Editor: Joan M. Holliday
Book reviews: Arthur W. Steller
Case studies/Research: Philip T. West

The Journal of Educational Relations is published quarterly by the Educational Communication Center, Box 657, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657. Telephone 717-761-6620.
Copyright 1998.
Subscriptions: Individual rate, $48 per year. Single copy, $15. Library rate, $60 per year. Single copy, $20. Add $4 for subscriptions outside of the United States. Payment in U.S. funds.

Periodicals postage paid at Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to ***Journal of Educational Relations***, P.O. Box 657, Camp Hill PA 17001-0657.

The Future...
Is Now.

Horoscope Forecast For Educational Editors—

Cast by famous editorial astrologer Ben Brodinsky

General Tendencies for the Day:

There is in the atmosphere tendencies which may lead to rashness and boasting. Postpone writing your editorials—give yourself another day for thinking. Exercise extreme caution in your dealings with your boss and other staff members. If you edit other people's copy today, avoid any tendency to write caustic marginal notes. Be constructive, stick to your style book and watch your budget.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

Today, be most careful of manuscripts that come to you signed by two honorifics, such as Dr. J. Smith, Ph. D. The double honorific implies that the author knows it all and is more concerned with personal prestige than with the reader's interests.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

You are likely to fall into the error that you can salvage a dull article by tacking on a splashy lead. Don't do it. The result will simply be a splashy lead and a dull article.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

A good day for sketching out plans for a special issue that will cover in-depth any of the five major issues confronting your readership. Consult with your advisory committee. And if you don't have one—today is a good day to begin creating such a group.

CANCER (Moon Children) (June 22-July 21)

This is no day to gratify your own editorial whims or to try to impose upon someone else's manuscript your personal stylistic idiosyncrasies. Heavens, no! Don't edit for conformity. And don't edit just for the sake of changing.

LEO (July 22-August 21)

This day is better suited for listening than for writing or talking. The afternoon, especially, is auspicious for scheduling an interview with a teacher, principal, superintendent or curriculum director. Be sure to let the other person do most of the talking. Listen for clues to

trends and hidden problems of your readership.

VIRGO (August 22-September 22)

Look over your "HOLD" file. If you find a manuscript that you've been holding more than four weeks, return it, print it, or schedule it for publication. In returning manuscripts you have kept more than a month, apologize with a courteous note.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22)

Beware of going overboard on the use of boxes on a printed page. Placing dull or unsuitable material in a box does not make the material brighter or more suitable.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)

A good day for sharpening your sensitivity to two facts: that the active voice is more effective than the passive voice...and that the best sentence begins with a concrete noun and is followed by a vigorous verb.

SAGGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)

Stop fretting about the typographical errors that crept into your last issue. Invest your energy today into drafting a postcard questionnaire to your readers. A "must" question for this instrument: "Please identify the piece or item in our last issue that you found *least* interesting or useful."

CAPRICORN (December 22-January20)

Plan a surprise for your reader in a forthcoming issue. Devise something different—to please and delight your readership. What shall it be? More legible type? A full-page, dramatic photograph? A new feature or department?

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 10)

A propitious day to visit your printer. Check to see whether you're sending clean copy, clearly marked as to specifications for typefaces and layout. Review with him your recent author alteration costs. Ask him what you can do to reduce his printer's bill.

PISCES (February 20-March 20)

Take it easy—especially during the first two hours of the day. This is no time to push. If you have to occupy your mind, why not repeat Mildred Fenner's editorial code:

> "Publishing periodicals for perusal by the profession or public presupposes these prerequisites: perceptible purpose; professional personnel; pertinent and perpetual planning; prime participation; progressive production; and prayerful postmortems."

Ben Brodinsky is a former president of EdPress and is retired executive of Croft Educational Services. He resides at 327 Seabury Dr., Bloomfield, CT 06002.

Mildred Fenner was a former editor of the NEA Journal.

Making Friends Before We Need Them—

Operating a Key Communicator Program

by Martha Bruckner

The image of a lighthouse brings to mind a mighty tower built on a strong foundation, able to give off an extremely bright light even in the midst of buffeting waves and wind. Early in the history of the Westside Community School District 66, in Omaha, Nebraska, it was labeled a "lighthouse school district."[1] Ever since, the officials of District 66 have taken risks that have paid off with high dividends for its 5,000 students.

Many reasons exist for the district's reputation, including above average standardized test scores and a list of local, state, and national awards. In addition, a program of "Key Communicators" has helped to garner a level of financial and vocal support that is atypical in Nebraska in recent years.

History of the District 66 Key Communicators Program

In 1992, in his first year as superintendent, Ken Bird told the Board of Education that his long-range goal was to improve and increase communication with the public. During that year, Dr. Bird and his director of communication, Ms. Di Saggau, focused on written publications to internal and external publics.

A year later, the superintendent and board president began open, informal forums with members of school-parent organizations.

In the third year of the plan, Dr. Bird, principals and staff brainstormed for methods to reach additional constituents. One administrator indicated that she had heard of a school whose staff identified and communicated with those individuals in the community who were most likely to influence others. After further study, Dr. Bird initiated the Westside *Key Communicators Program.*

Programs that target key communicators are based on the concept that certain community residents are "gatekeepers of information to and from the community...persons who are believed and trusted by their audiences".[2] They may or may not have high status in recognized power structures. Key communicators may be barbers, beauticians, owners of restaurants, dentists, or any people whom others see, talk to frequently and turn to in a time of a crisis. Officials in many school systems have increased the amount and quality of communications throughout the community and neighborhoods using similar efforts.[3, 4]

Specifics of the Program

Administrators and board members were invited to nominate those community members who might influence others.

Supt. Bird removed no names from the list, but he did add some. "I noticed that most of the submitted names were upper and middle class opinion leaders, government leaders and corporate officials. They are important, but blue collar workers weren't adequately represented, and we needed a balance. Since I had grown up in the district, I knew many people from my childhood years. For instance, I thought of Alice S. who had children in our district 25 years ago. She's a widow now, with no kids in school. She still pays taxes, but for 25 years no one from the district has talked to her about schools. I added her name and other 'salt of the earth' people."

The list of key communicators included district patrons and, by design, others outside of the district.

The superintendent explained the concept of "key communicators" in the first memo to them in December, 1994:

> **In an effort to keep community members informed about our schools and to provide additional opportunities for citizens to express their ideas and concerns, we at Westside Community Schools are establishing a network of people we are calling 'Key Communicators.' As a key communicator, you will be contacted whenever there is a need to disseminate information on critical issues quickly and accurately.**
>
> **We hope that this information will be relayed to people you know and come in contact with regularly. There are no meetings; however, we will rely on you for feedback. We hope that when you hear a question, or learn of a problem or an idea concerning our schools you will relay the information to us so we can take action as needed.**

Topics that have been the subject of mailings since the program began include budget plans, school openings, news about schools or persons in the district, strategic plans for the district, and review of state legislation. Mailings are done on an as-needed basis to keep the participants informed of important information.

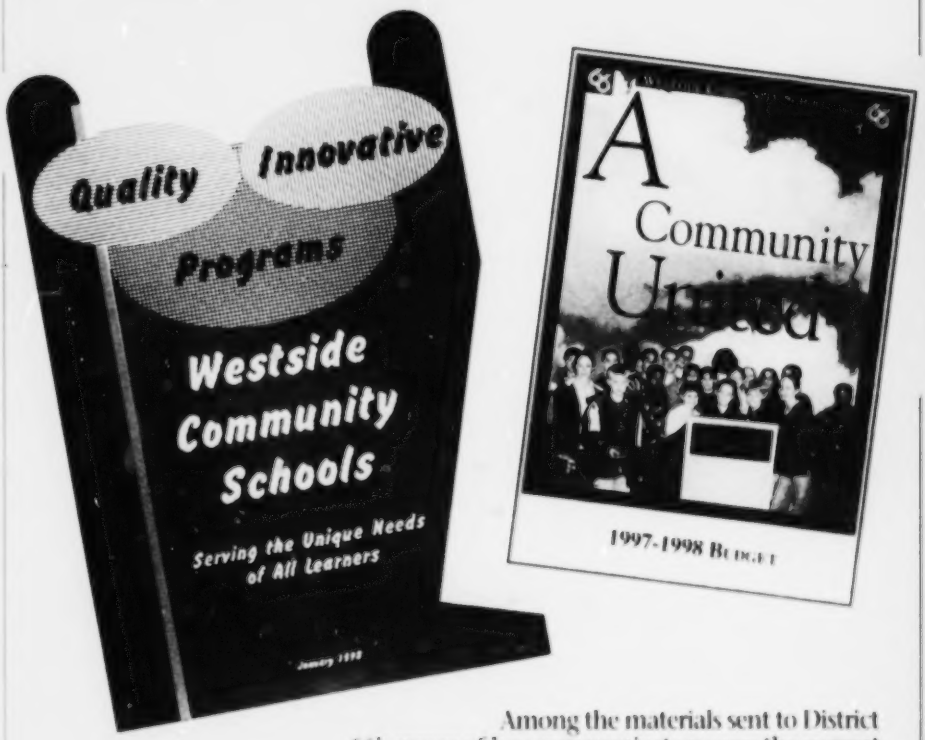
In the first 30 months of the program, nine mailings were sent. A recent packet of information included information about an upcoming levy override election as well as a review of "quality innovative programs" that exist in the district.

A Survey of Participants

How have the participants in the program reacted to their new role since 1994? In September, 1996, the staff mailed a survey to the 166 people in the program. (Of those who lived in the district—75 percent of the total group—more than 62 percent of them had lived in the district for 16 or more years, and 21 percent had lived there for six to 15 years. Nearly 17 percent of respondents had lived in the district for five or fewer years. Parent statistics **overall** for District 66 are similar to national trends: only 20 percent of residents have children in the local

Most appreciated topic	Percent listing topic
Curriculum and instruction	20%
Annual budget	19%
Other funding issues	16%
Future plans	13%
State legislation	11%

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



Among the materials sent to District 66's group of key communicators were the current budget overview (36 pages) and a comprehensive report (68 pages) of innovative projects to meet special needs.

The district superintendent cautions that most mailings to the key people should be short and to-the-point. Reports with many pages should be sent infrequently.

public schools. However, Westside's key communicators were different; almost 40 percent of them indicated that they had children in the district schools.)

The key communicators were asked how informed they were about their district as a result of being in the program. More than 70 percent of the opinion leaders labeled themselves as "very informed," and 27 percent indicated they were "somewhat informed." Almost 3 percent of respondents stated they were "poorly informed" or "not informed" about the district. More than 80 percent of them said that the *Key Communicator Program* added important information to their knowledge base.

The key people were asked to list information that was most appreciated in their mailings. More than 16 percent of them indicated that they appreciated all of it. Some listed their favorite topics.

Responding key communicators said they often requested additional material, including information about district issues and concerns, detailed plans to cope with financial cuts, school board minutes, long-range program plans, and information about professional staff training.

Participants were invited to share com-

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ments about the program in general. Most of their comments mentioned strengths of the *Key Communicators Program*. The following are typical statements:

- The staff makes a concerted effort to keep the whole 'community' informed, not just current parents. This is increasingly important as demographics shift and non-child households increase.
- The program allows for a broad range of involvement in the district, and for feedback to the district staff.
- *The Key Communicator Program* provides material that is timely, informative, unbiased, and important to better understand the complexities involved in the operation of a public school district. The program allows important information to be conveyed to a large percentage of the community through the key people.
- I believe the advantage to having this program is not only in establishing a cadre of well-informed citizens in the community...but in having people who can be turned to immediately when the public needs to be informed of legislation, laws, and events that will affect the district. This group can help supply others with current and correct information and be very supportive of the district.
- I deeply appreciate the demonstrated people-skills of District 66 staff. They don't waste our time by talking down to us or by endeavoring to hide problems from us. They treat us as part of the solution rather than the problem.

Several comments referred to the fact that the participants felt somehow special at being selected for the program:

- I hate to admit it, but there is some ego involved in thinking that I've been identified as a key person...I think the program strongly gives me a feeling that I have a voice that counts.

Recommendations about the Program

The program has operated for nearly three years. Supt. Bird and communication director Saggau offer these guidelines for people considering starting such a program:

1. Keep the membership limited. If too many persons are added as participants, they will tend not to be the real key communicators in the district and there will be no special distinction in being part of the group.

2. Limit the information that is sent. If the communicators are bombarded by massive information, the usefulness of the program diminishes as information sent will become less read or noted.

3. Be certain that they understand their role of sharing information both with their colleagues and neighbors, and providing feedback to district officials. If participants' only involvement is to read the district's material, then the full benefits of the communication cannot be realized. School officials should periodically remind participants that they are seen as key opinion leaders, and that they have a responsibility to remain informed and influential.

Perhaps Supt. Bird put the benefits of the program into the best context: "It comes down to the idea that the time to make friends is before you need them."

Notes

Note 1 The most recent risk involved asking for financial support by voters twice in one academic year. In September 1997, more than 28 percent of eligible voters went to the polls, passing a $28 million bond issue for renovation of the high school with 77 percent support. Earlier this year, local District 66 voters returned

to the polls to pass a local override of the state's new property tax levy limit.

Note 2 Strong community support is demonstrated in Westside's ability to pass a bond election with success in a year in which few other area districts were similarly successful. Similar support is displayed in the per-pupil expenditure in District 66, which is $7,100, compared with a state average of $6,100. About 74 percent of funding comes from local property taxes, and the local support for Westside Schools is considerably higher than many other districts.

Note 3 As the Westside Community Schools are located next to several other metropolitan districts in the Omaha area, school officials believed it was important to let some influential people from outside the district know about the working of this particular school district. For that reason, a limited number of non-patrons were also invited to become members of Westside's key communicator network.

References

1. Carlock, L. L. (1985). *H. Vaughn Phelps: An uncommon educator*. UNO Phi Delta Kappa Chapter, Omaha: Yaffe Printing. (He is a former superintendent in the same district.)

2. Bagin, D., D. R. Gallagher, and L. W. Kindred. (1996). *The School and Community Relations, Sixth Edition*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

3. Boynton, M. R. *Practical P.R. Techniques for Small Schools*. ERIC, 1985, ED 270 281.

4. Schaefer, W. F. III. *Building Public Confidence in Your School System: The Madison School District Success Story*. ERIC, 1981 ED 213 104.

Considerations before forming a Key Communicators Program

1. How many people should be identified as key communicators?

The number will depend somewhat on the size of the district, but the main caution is to keep the group small. Westside's 166 members is larger than many similar groups, but Dr. Bird knows each of the persons by name and face, and is comfortable communicating personally with each of them. Once the group loses the possibility of personal interaction, the benefit diminishes.

2. How should key communicators be selected?

The superintendent should make the final decision on membership, but the CEO should be advised by administrators, board members and teacher-leaders from the district. The group should include representatives from all important employee, parent, and community groups in the district.

3. Should the Key Communicator Program and names of the key people be made public?

No. While the *Key Communicator Program* is essential to the district, it should operate out of the public view. Key communicators should feel honored to be part of the group, but others in the community should not feel slighted because they are not included. Too much communication about the group can create questions or can build wedges among people in the community.

4. Who should be responsible for selecting and writing the information to be sent to the key communicators?

A district's communication director or one administrator (in districts without a communication director) should organize and oversee the publication and sharing of information. The staff and board members should suggest topics of interest. The superintendent, though, should have the major voice in the selection and timing of correspondence. Nothing should occur in the *Key Communicators Program* without specific involvement of the superintendent.

5. How can feedback be handled on regular matters?

District secretaries should know who the key communicators are, and respond in an efficient and appropriate way when receiving calls from them. A well-trained support staff should facilitate communication between key communicators and appropriate school leaders. The support staff members should recognize their own importance in the process of communication in the district. In addition, e-mail access can encourage feedback from key communicators.

6. If many school people are in the feedback loop, how is the superintendent to be made aware of consensus?

A district policy and emphasis on effective communication should set the stage for appropriate sharing of information. Administrators, teachers and board members should recognize that effective communication is an emphasis in the district. Each of these people needs to know to whom information/feedback should be funnelled. Also, administrators and board members need to know what information is being sent to the key communicators so that they may respond to queries when appropriate.

7. If someone is not on the list and wants to be, what should happen?

While it is very important that the key communicators list remain small, it cannot be perceived as an elite or exclusive club by non-members. Whenever possible, anyone with a valid desire to be part of the group should be included.

8. How does one handle adding / subtracting names of people, and at what frequency?

Names should be reviewed at least on a yearly, and appropriate changes should be made. During the year, special attention should be given, by one staff member, to the list in case members move, leave the district, pass away, etc. It may be a good idea to ask members periodically if they wish to continue in the group. Such a request will keep the district staff from

erroneously removing an influential member who is quietly but effectively using the information he or she has been sent.

9. How often should mailings be done? Monthly?

Some districts communicate on a regular basis; other districts choose to communicate specifically with them only when a need arises. If the regular district communication program is strong, as-needed mailings to key communicators should be sufficient. It is important that the key people receive "good" news at times throughout the year rather than be sent information only during crises or troubled times.

10. How is communication handled with key communicators in a crisis situation?

Crisis situations are some of the most important times to communicate with key communicators. As misinformation can escalate a bad situation, influential community members must be told the facts about important incidents as quickly as possible. Key communicators should receive full explanations of significant problems and descriptions of school or district actions that have been completed in response.

Martha Bruckner is department chair at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Department of Educational Administration, (6001 Dodge, Kayser Hall 414, Omaha NE 68182-0162). Dr. Bruckner was a high school teacher for eight years and a high school administrator for 14 years (in the Ralston, NE, School District) before moving to the University of Nebraska at Omaha. She teaches courses in school-community relations, governance and politics in education, administration of secondary schools, and school law.

About the origins of the *key communicators in education* term

In the mid-1960s, I had occasion to talk with Eddie Bernays (the father of public relations, in my opinion). We discussed the importance of face-to-face communication to gain public support for public education. Eddie had always been a strong proponent of identifying and communicating with the "influencers." He felt strongly that all successful public relations efforts must focus on the people who have a major impact on others, whether they be local folk who talk to lots of fellow community residents or the leaders in a field where one is trying to introduce a new product.

As we talked, the term "key communicators" became part of the conversation. Eddie explained that school officials must find out who the people were who talked to and were believed by a large number of others in their own walks of life. After this conversation, I started to work with staffs of many school districts to help develop the key communicator concept, both internally and externally.

After 30 years of advocating the key communicator idea, and using it myself when I served as public relations director for then Glassboro State College (now Rowan University), I believe the technique is the one most powerful, almost no-cost, ongoing two-way communications approach available to school officials.

Don Bagin

PHOTO GALLERY: Robert Finken

What is the hardest task in the world? To think.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

All that we are is a result of what we have thought.

The Dhammapoda

Policy Changes May Help Organizers of Charter Schools Meet Expectations

by Alex Medler

The charter school idea was launched about five years ago amid bold expectations. Today, a number of obstacles threaten to capsize some individual schools, and serious questions about the long-term direction of the movement are arising. Early experiences of the first charter schools suggest some policy changes that could help school organizers fulfill their promises of providing students and parents with choice and, in the long run, improving the education system.

Charter schools are independent public schools, formed by teachers, parents and/or other community members. Charter school sponsors (such as a school district) free the school organizers from most laws and policies in exchange for a written contract (or charter) specifying how the school will operate and what students are expected to achieve.

When the idea of charter schools first came up, proponents had two goals. One was to give students and parents choice by creating diverse schools that respond to education concerns of parents and citizens. The other goal was to stimulate improvement in traditional schools through competition. Charter school supporters argued that these independent public schools would result in increased choices, force stubborn bureaucracies to make traditional schools innovative and provide examples of successful, "accountable" schools from which others could learn. This kind of thinking stirred policymakers in 29 states and the District of Columbia to pass charter school legislation by July 1997.

Starting is difficult

But while the intentions were good, the seas of change haven't been calm. Charter school organizers face many challenges. The challenges aren't coming from untested pedagogy or radical classroom designs as some people might expect. Rather, the challenges arise from the difficulty of creating new schools "outside" the institutions that provide services, financial support and adequate facilities to other public schools.

Except for California, most charter school organizers start from scratch. Not only do they face the challenge of designing new forms of instruction, but they also have to deal with issues around buildings, start-up costs, ongoing budgets, access to credit and inadequate time for planning. While policymakers may be looking to charter schools to serve large numbers of children and put pressure on the whole system to change, charter school organizers are caught up in simply getting a

The lack of start-up funding frustrates charter organizers and makes it difficult for them to hire staff and plan their start-up.

school started and keeping it afloat and on course.

Recent research shows charter organizers, for example, have a hard time acquiring appropriate facilities or refurbishing inadequate ones. The lack of start-up funds frustrates early planning and makes it difficult to hire administrators and faculty in time for them to participate in that planning. Charter school operators who spend operating dollars on start-up expenses can have cash-flow problems later. In addition, while districts can carry over money from year to year or borrow against future revenues, charter school operators arrive with no money in the bank and no history or collateral. Consequently, they often cannot get credit, exacerbating their other financial difficulties.

The vast majority of charter schools overcome these barriers. So far, more than 480 charter schools are open and only a handful have failed.

But such obstacles threaten the viability of some schools, discourage potential applicants, fuel criticism of the entire movement and, most important, absorb a great deal of the school founders' time and attention that could be better focused on instruction.

Being different causes caution

Less pressing than these immediate concerns, but perhaps even more critical in the long run, are concerns about where charter schools are headed and how much impact they can have on other schools. Officials of charter schools do pressure officials of traditional schools to improve. But because they are viewed by the education establishment as "outsiders," there are limits to how much power they can exert and how much positive impact they can have.

A few trends among charter schools illustrate why people in the education establishment consider them outsiders.

First of all, most charter schools are small; 42% involve fewer than 100 students, and more than 20% serve fewer than 50 students. (Charters are even smaller outside California as many California charters have been converted from existing public schools.)

Second, many charter schools are started by people outside the traditional education establishment, such as parents and community members.

Third, these schools are often located in converted store fronts or rented offices, not in "real" school buildings.

Fourth, they operate outside many rules or regulations. These factors lead many educators and policymakers to view charter schools as exceptions or "alternative" schools.

In addition, because charter schools are difficult to start and keep going, they are unattractive to potential organizers. And local school board members and teachers in traditional schools may consider them too different or vulnerable to take seriously. If this is the case, the presence of charter schools is less likely to result in pressure on officials of other schools to change or to serve as sources of innovative ideas and successful practices.

The power of charter schools to result in the improvement of education seems to depend on their staffs' ability to teach a

greater number of students themselves—a dubious prospect given their size and the barriers listed above. Broader success will require these small, vulnerable institutions to force changes in large and formidable establishments—establishments whose leaders are amazingly adroit at resisting change.

Three possible solutions

Despite the challenges threatening to sink individual charters and questions about their overall direction, a few measures may improve charter schools' chances of succeeding. Three policy changes at the state level in particular could help charter schools provide choice and influence education as a whole.

1. Support for the autonomy and viability of charter schools. Organizers of schools need:

- Alternative sponsors, in addition to local school boards (or an appeals process that gives organizers the likelihood of eventual approval). There are many different models for alternative sponsors. States have allowed state boards of education, newly created state bodies and even higher education institutions to approve charter applications.
- Adequate and stable funding as well as start-up funds.
- Appropriate facilities or resources to refurbish existing spaces.
- Access to financial credit.
- Enough time and technical and legal assistance for organizers to budget adequately and plan for their first year of operation.

2. Incentives that encourage officials of existing schools to convert to charters. Such incentives include:

- Performance-based pay for teachers in successful charter schools.
- Streamlined approval of applications from existing public schools that already show evidence of working.
- Automatic relaxation of most rules and regulations, especially those controlling staffing.
- Guaranteed school-based control of budgeting and personnel.

3. Connections among the leaders of charter schools and other schools, districts and teachers.

- As charter schools demonstrate success, officials of the education establishment should remove their "outsider" label and encourage other public schools to work with them.
- States should encourage and help the staffs of like-minded schools (charter or otherwise) to network with one another to share their successes and failures.

These policy changes would help more charters succeed and allow officials of all schools to take advantage of their success. Without any changes, there is no doubt that hundreds of these schools will go far indeed.

New policies, however, could protect those schools that already have set sail by calming the seas. More important, these changes could encourage many more to attempt such journeys and increase the likelihood that all schools will benefit.

Alex Medler is a policy analyst specializing in charter schools at the Education Commission of the States (707 17th St., Denver, Colorado 80202-3427).
Among recent ECS publications is *A Policymaker's Guide to Education Reform Networks*, with detail about 34 major reform models and programs. Publications #51-97-11, $10 and $3 shipping, postpaid.

Mission Statements:
Properly Developed Statements Can Affect Staff Behavior

by John J. Koehn

More and more often I am seeing mission statements prominently displayed in schools as well as in private businesses. In fact, our local high school has its mission conspicuously displayed on the wall as you enter the school. A service station has its mission posted at eye level as you leave the cashier's area. Wendy's, a national fast-food chain, has its mission clearly stated on the drive-up window. Midwest Express, recently voted the best airline in the United States, states its mission in all of its ads and ticket folders: "To Provide the Best Care in the Air."

Mission statements are extremely important to the ultimate success of an enterprise, whether it is a public school, private business, or service organization. Mission statements, which are based on the organization's fundamental beliefs and values, tell your customers or clients who you are, what you do, and how you intend to do it. Done properly, a mission statement spells out clearly the purpose of you organization (what) and the function (how) you serve.

But, alas, mission statements can also be riddled with problems! Too often, mission statements are developed during a three-day retreat, brought back to the school or company, copied and framed, placed on the wall, and then it is "business as usual." The mission is not only forgotten, it is frequently violated or subverted. Publishing a mission statement and then forgetting that it exists can be fatal to the long-term success of the organization.

Because of my ongoing interest and curiosity regarding the role of mission statements, I not only take note of their existence. I have gone one step further in judging their effectiveness. I now seek out employees of organizations—be it a teacher, custodian, clerk, ticket agent, pilot, chef, flight attendant, or whomever. I ask these people two questions:

Do you know the mission of this organization?

What does it mean to you and how you do your job?

Unfortunately, in many organizations, public or private, many employees either don't know the mission or don't have a clue as to what it means to them. Such missions are useless.

However, employees in quality-driven organizations are able to answer both questions: This is our mission and this is what I do to help achieve it.

Let's take Midwest Express as an example. Recently, while waiting for my daughter to arrive from Denver, I thought this would be a good time to test my theory about mission statements. So, as I encountered Midwest employees, I asked the two questions. Without exception, all employees knew that the mission was "...to provide the best care in the air." Questioned further, each was able to describe what the mission meant to his or her role and responsibilities. For instance, the ticket agent stated something like "I make sure passengers are satisfied with their travel arrangements before they get on the plane." Or, the flight attendant said: "I ensure that each passenger is comfortable,

Test your mission

Yes	No	Maybe	• Was your mission arrived at collaboratively—does it truly represent a consensus of those involved in the organization?
Yes	No	Maybe	• Does your mission adequately describe your culture, and is it built upon the values of the organization?
Yes	No	Maybe	• Is your mission stated in clearly understood language—can it be paraphrased by all? (In the case of schools, "all" refers not only to teachers and other staff, but also parents and students.)
Yes	No	Maybe	• Does the mission serve as a significant factor in the decision-making process when determining the use of resources—time, money and energy of employees? In relationship to customers?
Yes	No	Maybe	• Is the mission used in the selection process when hiring new people? Are new employees introduced to the mission and do they understand the behavior expected of them as defined by the mission?
Yes	No	Maybe	• Does the mission serve as the foundation for staff training and development?
Yes	No	Maybe	• Is the mission-driven behavior regularly encouraged and reinforced by all persons in the organization?
Yes	No	Maybe	• Are feedback and corrective actions taken immediately when violations of the mission are detected or observed?

fed a high quality meal, etc." I was unable to talk to a pilot, but I'm sure I would have received a response similar to: "I provide the safest flight possible." This is why my travel agent has standing instructions to book me on Midwest Express first.

One thing was obvious to me as I interacted with the Midwest employees: All possessed high levels of training keyed to the mission. There were clear expectations that each employee had an obligation to work diligently to be true to the mission.

Unfortunately, not all organizations understand the importance of mission-driven behavior—particularly in recruiting and training programs.

One other recent example. Remember the eye-level mission statement in the service station? Upon seeing it as I was leaving, I decided to return to the cashier and ask my two questions: What does it say, and what does it mean for you? After concluding that I was not some sort of nut cake, the cashier said: "It deals with being courteous or something like that, and it means that I have to be nice to you." I'll go back and buy gas at that service station again.

So what does all this mean for schools and school systems? For mission statements to be meaningful and achieve the purpose for which they exist, they must have certain characteristics.

Perhaps you can use the following checklist to assess the adequacy of your mission and accompanying policies and procedures:

Test Your Mission Checklist

This checklist (on the previous page) can assist you in sharpening your mission statement and increase the chances that it will work toward achieving the desired strategic outcomes for your organization. If you checked a lot of **"Nos"** and **"Not Sures"** you may want to revisit your mission—both from the standpoint of process and product.

In addition to applying the check list, why not take the risk of asking the two questions of your employees: **Do you know your mission?** and **What do you do to contribute to its accomplishment?** You may discover some interesting things—after they figure out you're not a nut cake.

Examples of Mission Statements

Examples of mission statements related to the various roles that people perform within schools may be helpful.

Suppose officials of a school system have agreed to mission statements that stress the importance of a solid academic foundation as well as developing necessary interpersonal skills to be successful in life. As was demonstrated in the airline example above, all personnel must commit to performing their duties and responsibilities in a manner that contributes to the successful accomplishment of the school district mission.

Some examples would be the following mission statements for the positions identified:

Superintendent of Schools
To guide the Board of Education in establishing policies that encourage and support the achievement of academic excellence and students who are competent upon graduation.

School Principal
To ensure smooth operation of the school program while stressing a strong academic focus and emphasis on interpersonal skill development in each student.

Classroom Teacher
To design and implement instruction that is focused on developing academic standards and appropriate interpersonal relations and skills.

Custodian
To ensure a clean and healthful environment that supports the efforts of the teaching staff to provide effective instruction each day.

As you can see from the above examples, each person has a unique opportunity to define and perform an individual mission all keyed to the agreed-to district mission. Such behaviors contribute significantly to the overall success and accountability of the organization called a school system.

John J. Koehn is an instructor at Cardinal Stritch College in Milwaukee, Wisc. He is also a consultant to the Wisconsin Association of School Boards. This article appeared in the association's magazine, *Wisconsin School News*, published for $30 a year at 122 W. Washington Ave., Madison, WI 53703. His address is 1457 Crestwood Dr., Oconomowoc, WI 53066, 404-569-8506.

Communication Commentary

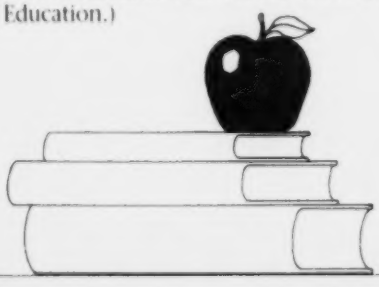
By the Editor

Study of Higher Education Preparation Regarding School Community Relations of School Administrations is Pending

As publisher of the *Journal* I am about to start a detailed study about how prospective school administrations are prepared to handle communication/PR concerns and programs.

The study will cover what higher education courses in this area are now being required or offered at all colleges of education. And we will learn what state departments of education require (or should require) in this area before one can become certified as a school or district CEO. We will provide an overview of what is being taught and required, and offer model programs for college and university officials to consider.

Contact the *Journal* editor for details about the project. (We are now at the stage of accepting funding through NSPRA's Foundation for the Advancement of Education.)



The Mother and Father Tongue Is Poisoned, SPELL People Claim

SPELL is an association whose members maintain a campaign against what they term "poisonings" of our common language. Among recent citations, SPELL pointed to:

- "The gorilla held a branch the size of a leg cut from a tree," said someone in a National Public Radio broadcast. A real tree limb, perhaps?
- A college official in Texas issued a statement to discourage student overindulgence of alcoholic beverages. "When it comes to drinking in residence halls, we give the students three shots and that's all." His statement was probably not accepted as he intended.

The SPELL newsletter is available for $20 a year and the editor is Richard Dowis, P.O. Box 118, Waleska, GA 30183.

Things Doing Things, Revisited

My first ongoing campaign has been for educators to recognize that the main function of school-community relations activities is to foster a climate in which students can learn best.

My second campaign (which is why I had to explain the first) relates to language of writers who, in a rush to simplify or add

"color," try to impart human-like qualities to static or surely not-human-like substances.

An example I usually cite is "the school is giving everyone a day off Friday," as opposed to "the principal is giving..." or the superintendent or even the board. (The board is a legal entity and can do things, but a school is just a *place* where *people* do things.)

I've recently run across two extreme examples of this genre:

Describing a difficult golf hole, a magazine writer had this to say about #9 at a York course:

> "The hole climbs toward a distant plateau and, from there, takes a gentle turn left and up toward the clubhouse. **Wind encounters** no obstacles here, and **seems to enjoy the downhill ride into the golfer's face**."

Another lyrical golf writer, this one for a national wire service, had to consider the result if Tiger Woods were to win his second Masters tournament in a row in April. He imagined this possibility:

> "Familiarity, the saying goes, breeds contempt. At Augusta (in Georgia), it breeds reverence. If Tiger Woods can match what he did at the familiar old course last year, **those tall pines that whisper Bobby Jones and Ben Hogan can start to learn to pronounce Tiger Woods.**"

One antidote to such writing maladies is to have an editor or at least a person other than the writer review copy. Or to have a policy: **We insist on people, not things, doing things.**

ECS Produces An Almost-Successful Guide—It Is a Useful Get-Started Reference

Building Community Support for Schools is the title of a 1997 publication of the Education Commission of the States (AN-97-3, 32pp. $10, 707 17th St., Denver CO 80202. 303-299-3600).

The text is a **useful get-started guide** and could be the **base document** for members of a school district team assigned to develop a communication program. One will be directed to set goals, listen to people in the school-community, identify major audiences, learn how to write "clearly," identify and work with key communicators, "show" student work, analyze methods and activities to reach desired audiences, produce resource materials, marshall financial and other means to support the program, and evaluate and adjust it as required.

The overall guide is aimed at building support, which the authors call "a strategic communications plan." They define its purpose to "set more [sic] thoughtful priorities, spend scarce resources more [sic] wisely, target activities to key individuals and groups, regularly measure results and make necessary adjustments." They refer to "effective public engagement, which when tied to a coherent plan, is an investment that pays for itself many times over."

The authors refer to communication skills of "politicians and businesses and companies such as Procter & Gamble which spend up to 35% of their annual budgets on community relations, public affairs, etc...to communicate with their most important customers."

They then write: "Yet, most school districts and education reform groups spend far less than this—about one-half of 1%,

according to the National School Public Relations Association...that's not nearly enough."

The reference to one-half of 1% of a district's annual operating budget is *incorrect* for the majority of school systems, according to our research (and I do not believe that percentage is cited by NSPRA as an average now spent in school districts). The one-half of 1% figure has traditionally been cited as an *ideal* amount, with less for a huge school district and more for a small district. Most of the nation's 15,000 school districts do not even have a formal strategic communication plan and a part-time or full-time person assigned as director of such a plan, in which case one-half of 1% might apply. The authors reference to *education reform groups* appears to be misplaced and probably should not have been included at all in this reference to funding.

But The Guide Has Limitations

Note that the guide does not cover areas that this *Journal* editor would consider part of a **district's comprehensive plan.** The areas this report **does not cover** include parent and family involvement, local business and community group partnerships, volunteers and resource people in schools, mentors and tutors, alumni and other support foundation groups, working with senior citizens, community service opportunities for students, among others.

The authors refer to studies that confirm the statement "improving education has become the public's highest priority." I contend that building community support must be considered as an important **first** step in doing what may be needed to improve our schools. As **second** steps, district officials need to declare priorities, in addition to the excellent ones cited in this report as to what parents and others in the community can do to become actively involved with the staff on behalf of their children.

An aggressive program that involves parents and citizens can do a great deal to establish a positive and helpful school climate and help enhance student achievement.

Restatement of Concern of This *Journal* Editor

The ECS authors' define "involving" the public as a process that is "a consistent effort to **listen** long and hard to your community [members]...and be prepared to let them influence the design and implementation of policy." Note the word **influence.** The word **participate** is not used.

That they urge school officials **to listen long and hard** is quite commendable. Our contacts with school leaders and *Journal* contributors in the past 23 years indicate that this is **not** what most school officials and board members do on a regular basis.

But then the authors stop. They want **better-supported/understood policies and practices, but that's all.** They do not specify ways members of the community then can have **ongoing roles** of lesser or greater dimension in the implementation of these **better supported/understood** policies and practices. They completely ignore any reference to parent involvement, for example.

They write "these are precarious times for public schools...by most measures, the [schools] are not doing well enough to prepare students for a more [sic] challenging world." They go on to state that "the president, governors and business leaders continue to express concern...and propose steps to improve education."

To refresh readers' memories, goal 8 of the National Educational Goals (adopted

by the President and Governors) reads:

> **Parental Participation: By the year 2000, every school [board] will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional and academic growth of children."**

The authors cite their concern with keeping "everyone...focused on student achievement...and demonstrating how improved student achievement benefits everyone." Yet they define the end product of their strategic communication plan as **helping the citizenry influence the design and influence the implementation of policy.** What they mean by **implementation** of policy is not at all clear, but I suspect they mean people should suggest how educators carry out the policies the citizenry have been asked to help design and that is all.

They have not specified **increased involvement**, wherever possible and appropriate, of parents and local business people and seniors and others in the community.

Such activities, well planned and carried out, will be as effective as any other means to improve student achievement, and that is a sure way to **Build Public Support**.

CEO Survival Hinges on Communication

At the 1998 AASA national conference in San Diego, three speakers made these points in a symposium about "surviving the Superintendency":

• "Today, the superintendency is more about relationships and people than about management and administration." (Michael Copeland, supt., Altus, OK.)

• "In Illinois, superintendents do not spend enough time communicating. Our research shows two-thirds of superintendents in Illinois spend less than three hours a week in direct communication with their boards of education. Studies of exemplary superintendents show that they spend more than half their time working with their boards and communities." (Thomas Glass, professor, Northern Illinois University.)

• "I'd like to challenge CEOs to **SHAPE** the superintendency. 1, Spell out district goals, 2, Have high expectations. 3, Articulate and communicate. 4, Plan and 5, Evaluate (everyone, including yourself). (Judy Margrath-Huge, supt., Adams District 12, Colo.)

AASA's home page is available at http\\:~~www.aasa.org.

What Makes A Super Superintendent?

Three professors at Sul Ross State University-Rio Grande College, Texas, have surveyed practicing superintendents to learn what they believe are the most important skills or abilities of 12 possible ones suggested by the professors (Ben Wilson, Jr., Elmer J. Ireton, James A. Wood).

The first three of the 12 have to do with communication and relationships with people. The responding superintendents said that the three most important priorities are:

1. Possess skills necessary to relate and deal with the board of trustees (school board members).

2. Possess human relations and communication skills in dealing with external publics (members of the community).

3. Possess human relations and communication skills in dealing with internal publics (teachers, support staff, other administrators).

Ben Wilson, Jr. has extra copies of the team's report. Contact him at the college, 400 Sal Ross Dr., Uvalde, TX 78801.

Throwing Out the Book with the Tech Changeover

A science teacher discovers that textbooks still have merit.

by Jim Izat

Principal Ernest Ortiz found himself in a major dilemma his first year as principal of Redwood High School, a medium-sized city about 100 miles north of San Francisco. He was focusing his efforts to establish himself as the instructional leader for his campus, aware that this would be difficult since previous principals had not entered the curricular arena to any great extent. Without warning, a significant curricular issue in the science department began to surface midway through the first week of the fall semester.

Wanda Smith was a highly recommended recent addition to the science department staff. With six years of experience in teaching chemistry, she had transferred to the district to teach and complete an internship experience to satisfy state principal certification requirements. Her assignment was to coordinate the distribution of textbooks to the student body, implementing the new textbook bar coding system purchased that year.

Through her first administrative experience, Wanda learned that no textbook was to be distributed in the chemistry classes of Redwood High. She was deeply concerned by the complete lack of any textbook resources for the students; a concern shared by her fellow chemistry teachers. This concern later turned to confusion when she discovered that about 190 older chemistry textbooks were left unused on the shelves of the book room after classroom distribution was completed.

Unknown to Wanda, the chemistry textbook problem, or rather textbook lack problem, had been brought up many times before by Sondra Orion, who taught regular level chemistry. Each time the issue had been raised, the science department had deflected it by stating that the curriculum would be taught entirely on the computers, and that textbooks would not be used.

Burt Regan had served as the science department head at Redwood High School for 13 years. His many accomplishments included staffing the department with unusually competent teachers and equipping his staff with the latest in technologically driven curricula. He was also part-time assistant principal at the high school and in the final stages of completing a doctorate in educational administration at the local university.

Burt was well liked by the district central office staff and had, over the years, developed a working relationship with Superintendent Elizabeth Longbow. For several years, he had used his position as department head to practice administrative skills and, in the opinion of his supe-

Through her first administrative experience, Wanda learned that no textbook was used in the science laser disc curriculum.

"There are 194 chemistry textbooks sitting in the book room gathering dust...I want to have an 'adopt a homeless chemistry book' promotion with my chemistry class."

Teaching and principalship intern Wanda Smith

riors, had done a fine job.

With 190 textbooks awaiting use on her mind, Wanda Smith thought that her best course of action was to discuss the matter with the science department head. If I just explain my concerns, she reasoned, and point out that the textbooks I need are just collecting dust in the book room I'm sure that he'll come around to my point of view.

The meeting with Burt Regan did not proceed quite as she had planned. As Wanda began explaining her concern over the lack of textbooks for her students, Burt abruptly interrupted her.

"There is only one thing you need to concern yourself with Wanda," he coldly stated. "I went to bat with the school board for an extended period of time to get that laser disc curriculum adopted, and it will be used in the classroom. If the curricular materials or the computers are too difficult for you to use, I'll arrange for in-service training for you.

"We had the option of purchasing the textbooks that accompanied the laser disc software, but I saw no reason for both the computer-driven curricula and textbooks. Now, if there is nothing further for us to talk about, I have a meeting with the superintendent downtown in 20 minutes." He left the room hurriedly with a barely discernible "See you tomorrow" flung over his shoulder, leaving Wanda stunned.

After she recovered, she went straight to Sondra Orion's room to verify what Burt had said. Yes, the science teacher replied, "It's true. He had meetings with us two years ago; and we met and met until we all just agreed with his plan for the laser discs. What else could we do? We could tell after 10 minutes with him that he had it all planned.

"You also have to remember," she continued, "that Burt is in tight with the principal and the superintendent. This laser disc project was meant to be his ticket to a new assistant superintendent slot in curriculum. We really fought for the textbook that went along with the system. As I recall, he told us that we were perfectly capable of writing any additional material ourselves. A former teacher, Jeff Starbuck, did and left behind what he wrote. Look in the top drawer of your desk, it's quite a stack."

Wanda, who was feeling completely overwhelmed by the complexity of the situation, left the room and went next door to her new classroom. Not only had her predecessor left the files—a nearly 5-inch stack of notes, worksheets, lab directions and tests—he had left a note. The note read:

> To my replacement
>
> I would suggest that you use these materials as best you can. The laser discs are fine for a reinforcement and reteaching tool, but they don't stand alone. Trust me, it is not worth fighting Regan on this issue. I tried and failed.
>
> Good Luck.

To Wanda, this was too much. There must be something that she could do. She had to find some way to put those available textbooks into the hands of her stu-

dents. Without thinking, she left her room and went directly to the office of Principal Ortiz to see what might be done about the situation.

As she was about to enter his office, she noticed nine boxes of new chemistry textbooks sitting outside assistant principal Robert Arrow's office. Examining them, Wanda saw that the books were a new edition of the textbooks she had used the previous year to teach honors chemistry in another district.

"Principal Ortiz," she gently asked while sticking her head into his office, "whose chemistry books are those in the hallway?"

"What textbooks?" Ortiz responded, genuinely baffled.

Wanda lifted the top carton of books off the stack and placed them on the floor next to the principal's desk.

"These chemistry textbooks," she said, groaning from the exertion.

"Oh, those are for Burt Regan, he ordered them last April."

"Really?" Smith persisted, "do you mean that the science head is going to use text books in *his* honors classes?"

"So it would seem," the principal flatly replied, his questioning gaze opening an opportunity for her to approach the problem.

"Principal Ortiz," she began, "I would like to give my students an extra boost this year, and I need your permission before I can do what needs to be done."

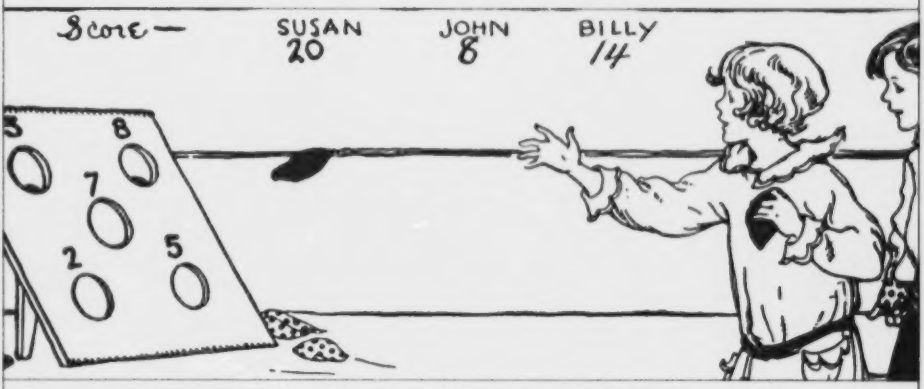
"Well, Wanda, what do you have in mind?"

"There are 194 chemistry textbooks sitting in the book room gathering dust," the teacher quickly replied. "Do you suppose that I could distribute them to my students as an added resource for their studies? What I would like to do is have an 'adopt a homeless chemistry book' promotion with my chemistry classes. I think that my students could develop a positive sense of ownership in the learning process through this plan," she hastily concluded, hoping that the principal wouldn't interrupt her.

Ernest Ortiz couldn't think of any reason to disapprove of her plan. Nodding, he replied, "I think that this can be an effective approach. Tell Robert Arrow that I okay releasing the textbooks. Keep me updated during the year on this program. If it works out well, perhaps we can put it in written form to share with the rest of the faculty."

A few minutes later in the assistant principal's office, Robert asked, "Wanda, exactly how will your program work?"

"I think I will move 126 textbooks to my room tomorrow, and during the first day of class throw open the adoption



process. I can keep a record of the numbers of the textbooks that are adopted, and then add those numbers to the students' book card entries."

"You don't need to do that. Just leave the list on my desk by the end of the week and I'll have one of my student aides do it. At the end of the year, just tell your students to return their books with the rest."

"Thank you, Robert" Wanda said gratefully. "Don't thank me yet," the assistant principal cautioned, "I have a feeling that the manure has yet to hit the oscillatory atmospheric accelerator, if you know what I mean."

Fifteen minutes later, she had loaded the first 50 textbooks onto the book cart and was returning to her classroom. As she turned the last corner of the hall, she met the science department chief head-on as he was returning from his meeting with the superintendent. She was astonished that he merely grumbled "Watch out!" and hurried on to his classroom, closing the door behind him.

Believing that she had narrowly escaped a confrontation, she hurriedly made the two additional trips to amass the required number of textbooks in her classroom. Just as she was finishing stacking the last textbooks, Sondra Orion walked in and exclaimed, "What are you doing?"

"What does it look like I'm doing?" replied Wanda.

"It looks like you are going to hand out these books to your students. Did Burt Regan say you could do this?"

"No, but he did hurry by me when I was in the hallway with a cartload of books, and his only comment was 'Watch out'."

"You're kidding," Sondra whispered. "There's no way you're going to succeed with this."

"Well, I figured that if Burt could give his honors students books, then I could give my classes books, too," Wanda said defiantly.

"He's doing what?" the science teacher gasped in disbelief.

"You heard what I said. Right now, there are nine cases of honors level textbooks sitting outside Robert Arrow's office that the principal told me our science head had ordered last April."

Sondra collapsed in a chair, uttering in a barely audible, but bitter, voice, "I can't believe it, with all he put us through."

"It seems," replied Wanda while straightening the textbooks, "that books are necessary to Burt after all."

The science teacher looked up at Wanda and asked,"Are there any more?"

"Yup, about 68 if my count is correct."

"Well, let's grab a class set for me, too," she said, heading for the door.

Parents calling Principal Ortiz praised the science teacher for sending a textbook home with their children as a help in the difficult subject. But the superintendent was fuming.

"Are you sure that all you want is a class set?" Wanda asked, starting to worry that her plan would come to nothing if Sondra decided on books for all her students.

"No, a class set is all I'll need. I've almost written a text over the last two years, but it would be helpful if my students could have access if they wanted to take a book home."

Agreeing, Wanda rolled the cart out of the door.

To all appearances, the first six weeks of school were a smashing success. Principal Ortiz' newly instituted Parents Night with the Teachers was met with overflow crowds. As the principal settled into the rhythm of his first six weeks in his new position, he began receiving phone calls about Wanda Smith. Call after call from parents came into his and the counselor's office and they all had much the same message.

Without one exception, the parents wanted to thank the principal for having the excellent judgment to hire a chemistry teacher who had the courage to provide their children with a textbook. In the difficult subject, there had not been one for the last two years. The only question they asked was, "Why are the textbooks in such terrible shape?"

The principal recalled that he allowed Wanda to start her "adopt a text program." It had seemed a fine idea when the teacher had brought it to him. But why did it seem such a tremendous event to the parents, and why were the textbooks in such "terrible shape?" Just then the phone rang. Elizabeth Longbow, the superintendent, was on the line.

"What's all this uproar at your campus about textbooks, Ernest?" she asked, coming right to the point.

"I'm not sure I understand it at all, Elizabeth. I allowed Wanda Smith in chemistry to distribute some textbooks that were in the book room to her students. It seemed like a great idea at the time," replied the baffled principal.

"Well, parents are calling me asking why their children didn't have a textbook

"This whole laser disc project was meant to be the science department head's ticket to a new assistant superintendent slot"

Science teacher Sondra Orion

last year when the students have one this year. Ernest, we went to great lengths to implement a laser disc curriculum in the chemistry program and eliminate those textbooks," the superintendent stated forcefully. "I want you to have Burt and Wanda in your office tomorrow at 2 p.m. I will see you then!"

The school's student counselor Tom Goodheart knocked on the principal's door as he hung up the phone, "Are you busy?" he asked.

"What is it, Tom?" Ernest tiredly inquired.

"I have a group of parents who would like to come in this afternoon and thank you for letting their children have textbooks this year for chemistry. What should I tell them?"

Ernest didn't answer immediately. He was thinking about the pending meeting and what "telling" may happen then.

Response to the Case Study

Pave the Way to a Successful Meeting—Preparation is the Answer

by Olga V. Garcia

In the above case, the new principal of Redwood High School, Ernest Ortiz, faces a problem involving textbooks and a laser disc curriculum in the chemistry program. He approves the distribution of textbooks for learning reinforcement and receives praise from the parents for his decision. The superintendent, hearing of this, wants to know why such an action has been taken after so much effort was made to implement the laser disc curriculum and eliminate the textbooks. The major figures in the case are Burt Regan, head of the science department and part-time assistant principal; Wanda Smith, science teacher, and administrative intern; and Elizabeth Longbow, the district's

superintendent.

The distribution of chemistry textbooks was successful. Parents called the principal to thank him for his part in allowing Wanda Smith to provide textbooks to their children. Principal Ortiz is pleased with the feedback, especially since he wants to establish himself as the instructional leader of his school. Consequently, it seems foolish to stop the distribution of the textbooks.

To support his decision, the principal should actively seek the support of the satisfied parents prior to his mandatory meeting with the superintendent, Burt Regan and Wanda Smith. Indeed, he should ask them to visit the superintendent with him to express their satisfaction to her. This would allow the superintendent to gain some ownership in the book project and to become aware of the fine reception that the return of chemistry textbooks has received.

Before the conference meeting, Principal Ortiz should also take the time to meet alone with the science department head. In a non-threatening manner, he should indicate to Burt the success of the textbook use and tell him that the superintendent has also received positive feedback and that a 2 p.m. meeting will take place in the principal's office the next day.

The principal should also inform Wanda of the pending situation before the conference meeting. At that time, however, he should not say much more than that her presence will be required at 2 p.m. in his office tomorrow regarding the distribution of chemistry textbooks; and that she should be prepared to explain the favorable outcome of her efforts to the superintendent.

Taken together, these actions should pave the way to a positive conference meeting. The superintendent will have been exposed to the success of the textbooks and be less likely to disagree with any future distribution. Burt Regan may protest some, but will ultimately abide by the superintendent's decision. Wanda Smith will provide additional feedback from satisfied parents and students to prove that the use of the chemistry books is a win-win situation.

In preparing meticulously for this important four-way meeting, Principal Ortiz will be taking a major first step toward becoming an instructional leader. By approaching the problem without delay and on a one-to-one basis, he will be avoiding a confrontation that could endanger not only his status, but also his position.

Olga V. Garcia is a graduate assistant in the department of educational administration at Texas A&M University.

Inside yourself or outside, you never have to change what you see, only the way you see it.

Thaddeus Golas
The Lazy Man's Guide to Enlightenment

Book Reviews

By Arthur W. Steller

Books for review and requests to serve as guest book reviewer may be sent to editor Arthur W. Steller, Superintendent of Kingston City Schools, 61 Crown St., Kingston, NY 12401.

Coming Clean About Organizational Change: Leadership in the Real World.

By Jerry Patterson. American Association of School Administrators, 1801 N. Moore St., Arlington, VA 22209. 1997. 67 pp., $10.95.

At times, it seems as if our educational system is being called upon by most of the world's non-educators to change, change some more, and the top it off with even more change. Generally, the education literature shows the sunny side of reform. This booklet takes a peek behind the scenes to reveal that school leaders can do all the 'right stuff' and yet the process can still be painful.

The author, an experienced school administrator, believes that there are "A Dozen Harsh Realities" about organizational resilience. They are:

- Most people act first in their own self-interest, not in the interest of the organization.
- Most people don't want to genuinely understand the what and why of organizational change.
- Most people engage in organizational change because of their own pain, not because of the merits of the change.
- Most people expect to be viewed as having good intentions, even though they view with suspicion the intentions of those initiating organizational change.
- Most people opt to be victims of change rather than architects of change.
- Most organization officials operate non-rationally rather than rationally.
- Most organization officials are wired to protect the status quo.
- Most organization officials initiate change with an event-driven rather than value-driven mentality.
- Most organization officials engage in long-term change with short-term leadership.
- Most organization officials expect the greatest amount of change with the least amount of conflict.
- Most people and organization officials deny that the other 10 realities are, in fact, their own reality.
- Most people and organization officials do have the capacity to develop resilience in the face of the other 11 realities.

Those who are involved with communicating the change process in educational circles will find this short piece fascinating, truthful and helpful.

Empowerment Takes More Than a Minute.

By Ken Blanchard, John Carlos and Alan Randolph. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 155 Montgomery St., San Francisco, CA 94104-4109. 1996. 126 pp., $20.

Empowerment is one of the hot topics in organizations these days. The rhetoric is appealing and consultants promise improved results and morale. Many managers, sold on the concept of empowerment, press forward by quickly turning over authority to those who report to them. The catcalls start. What began with enthusiasm ends with frustration.

The reason that empowerment may turn sour is that it is not "giving power to people." It is releasing the experience, knowledge and power that they already possess. And it takes time, more than a minute.

The authors offer three keys to empowerment: Share information with everyone, create autonomy through boundaries, and replace the hierarchy with self-directed teams.

Readers will enjoy the entertaining format of this book and will find it most educational.

Parents Are Lifesavers: A Handbook for Parent Involvement in Schools.

By Carol Batey. Corwin Press, Inc., 2455 Teller Rd., Thousand Oaks, CA 91310. 1996. 102 pp., $18.

School community relations programs should have parental involvement at the base. Author Batey relays her personal experience as a parent. It began with striking a deal with the school principal so that her child could have the teacher she wanted in exchange for Batey volunteering at the school. She later became the co-president of the school-parent organization. From that platform, she won an award and was acknowledged as a local expert on parental involvement.

At this point, she asked the superintendent to create a non-paying job, parent coordinator, for her with some expense money. This book is a byproduct of her efforts, describing what she did and what she recommends to improve parental involvement in public schools.

Much of the literature on this topic assumes that all educators want parents as active participants and all parents are anxious to give their time and energy to further the schools goals. Neither, of course, is the case in the real world of this author, who provides some remedies for overcoming these constraints.

If you are seeking ways to increase parental involvement, this handbook will tell you how to create the proper climate for parents, starting from scratch. It also covers using parents' expertise and developing ways to promote more of a partnership. Although it is not an easy task, the author believes the struggles are part of the ritual because, as she says, when educators and parents are jointly involved, "It works! It works! It works!"

How to Avoid Crossfire and Seek Common Ground: A Journey for the Sake of Children.

By Marjorie Ledell. American Association of School Administrators, 1801 N. Moore St., Arlington, VA 22209. 1995. 32 pp.

In a democracy, questions and debate are part of the governing process. School personnel often find themselves at the center of such public discussions. Without sufficient common ground, educators can easily become caught in the crossfire if people in communities fight among themselves for dominance.

When everyone believes and participates in certain basic strategies, you have a "starting point for establishing a common ground." These strategies are:

- Listen to a wide cross section of people, including those who disagree, through a variety of ways and in many places.
- Anticipate issues and separate them from personalities.
- Avoid labeling people as extremists or naysayers just because they disagree with you and ask tough questions.
- Institute formal processes to monitor, measure and disseminate the results of decisions by the board of education, school committees or community advocacy groups.

• Demonstrate through clear evidence that pedagogical research and assessments that you think are desirable are also technically sound.

• Create relationships built on trust and confidence, and processes designed on the basis of efficiency, openness and accountability.

• Acknowledge and embrace the fact that all decisions and actions must withstand public scrutiny, discussion and debate.

These are certainly worthwhile pursuits, although if everyone already accepts them, much of the rest of the process is relatively easy. Of course, it is not that simple.

Perhaps the most solid barrier to establishing common ground is that people have to change. While this pamphlet states that only 15 percent of people accept change quickly, the author suggests that, "As you and others seek common ground, you may need to give up on getting everything you advocated—as will other people."

Leading Without Power: Finding Hope in Serving Community.

By Max DePree. Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 350 Sansome St., San Francisco, CA 94104. 1997. 192 pp., $20.

Educators will gravitate towards the lofty ideals expressed in this book. It is not the bottom line, bureaucratic rules or the incentive of a higher paycheck that drives people to achieve more success. The true motivator for all people, the author contends, is life-fulfilling work.

Organizational leaders who strive for this goal are seen as "movers" and have improved internal and external public relations.

According to DePree, also author of the best-selling *Leadership Is an Art*, people willingly follow their hearts in dynamic settings with enlightened leaders who do not rely solely upon power as their main catalysts. Not-for-profit organizations rely on intangible incentives like purpose to motivate their employees. He advises all organizational leaders to use this powerful elixir.

Looking Good on Paper: How to Create Eye-Catching Reports, Proposals, Memos, and Other Business Documents.

By Garrett Soden. American Management Association, 135 W. 50th St., New York, NY 10020. 123pp. $16.95.

The design element in preparing written communications is often either forgotten or the last consideration. The look and tone of your document must attract your audience's attention, which is one of the functions of design. An unappealing visual message can distract the reader from the content.

The approach in this handbook is, "To create a document that sells your ideas...take the same steps that you do when you write; analyze your message to see how it can best be expressed and analyze your audience to anticipate what will create a positive response." The author believes that the design approach should

coincide with the purpose of the message. Various design techniques and a document checklist are provided in this book.

How Good People Make Tough Choices.

By Rushworth Kidder. William Morrow & Co., Inc., 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10017. 1995. 241pp. $22.

"How will it look on the front page of the newspaper?" is a common litmus test for decision-making from a public relations perspective. The author, a former journalist, incorporates this particular assessment as one of his four tests for decisions on issues. The first test is whether the matter at hand deals with an enforceable law that would make it a legal concern. Another indicator is the "stench test"—a gut level reading about the "smell" of the proposed action. A third criterion is the "mom test" or "If I were my mother (or any moral exemplar who loves me), would I do this?" Whenever an issue fails these tests, it likely requires a right-vs-wrong decision.

These tests comprise the fourth component of what is suggested as a nine-step sequence for addressing the messy subject of ethical issues. The first three checkpoints are: recognize that there is a moral issue, determine the actor, and gather the relevant facts. Guidelines five through nine are: test for "right versus right," apply the resolution principles, investigate the "trilemma" options, make the decision, and revisit and reflect on the decision. While this process seems a bit cumbersome, the intent is to practice ethical decision-making until the response is automatic and instant—one chooses correctly without thinking.

The road to ethical behavior parallels the pathway to excellence in any endeavor. Rushworth Kidder states it this way: "The only way to protect purity, I suspect, is to work at it. Ethics, as I said earlier, is not an inoculation."

The more that school personnel and students work at making sound ethical choices, fewer negative stories will be on the front page of the newspaper. Ethics should be a major interest of school communicators on that basis alone, not to mention the other products of enhancing the common good.

The Owner's Manual for the Brain.

By Pierce Howard. Leornian Press, 5272 McCormick Mountain Dr., Austin, TX 78734. 1994. 399pp. $29.95.

While the content of this volume addresses many topics applicable to school public relations personnel, there is another reason to peruse it. This author demonstrates how to translate dry, technical and often downright boring research into language accessible to a larger audience. Education could use more of that kind of writing.

This book attempts to bridge the gap between the cognitive research material already available and practical, how-to pieces such as how to improve your memory. In some areas, a solid bridge has been constructed, while in others, a frayed rope would be a more apt description.

With a unique perspective, the author acknowledges the frailties of his work with this disclaimer: "Warning to Reader: Swallowing everything in this book, hook, line and sinker, could be hazardous to your health," which is placed in boxes in the margins throughout the book.

Research on the brain dominates this presentation, although it is rewritten into a practical and readable fashion. There are also applications for every topic so the reader has an opportunity to see some implications.

PHOTO GALLERY: Robert Finken

Fear always springs from ignorance.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Photo Credits

Addresses for photographers whose work we are using in Vol. 19, No. 1:

Robert Finken is a freelance photographer based in Richmond, Virginia (11016 Ashburn Rd., 23235). Call him at 804-320-1489 for special assignments.

Michael Siluk lives and works from New Brighton, Minnesota, (1000 3rd St., NW, 55112). His phone number is 612-636-5843, and he is available for assignments.

Both can supply a variety of photos for review and publication on a one-time basis for fees to be arranged depending on the nature of the use.

1998 *Journal* Editorial Review Board

Larry Ascough, Elgin, IL,U-46 Schools

Don Bagin, Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ

B. Dean Bowles, University of Wisconsin

Carolyn H. Chapman, Univ. of Nevada, Reno

Marsha Chappelow, Blue Valley Schools, Overland Park, KS

Judith Cochran, Wright State University, OH

Floyd Coppedge, State Secretary of Education, OK

Larry E. Decker, Florida Atlantic University

Don Gallagher, professor emeritus, Rowan University

Mel Heller, Loyola University, Chicago

Anne L. Jefferson, University of Ottawa

J. William Jones, PECO Energy Co., PA

Theodore J. Kowalski, Ball State University, IN

William Allan Kritsonis, Lake Charles, LA

Tami James Moore, University of Nebraska, Kearney

Donna M. Schmitt, Eastern Michigan University

I. Sue Shepard, Southeast Missouri State University

Harriett Stonehill, Megaskills Education Center, Washington, DC

Arthur W. Stellar, Kingston Schools, NY

Philip T. West, Texas A&M

Charles L. Willis, Dayton, OH

Brenda Williams, College of William and Mary, VA

Guidelines for Submission

Relations—The Journal of Educational Relations

A refereed journal--scholarly articles by academic/higher education authorities are refereed by an international editorial review board. The *Journal* also accepts articles by practitioners and administrators in basic (K-12) education and journalists at large.

Scope

Articles are sought on topics such as internal communication and climate, employee motivation, parent involvement, partnerships, working with the news media, community participation, audits, surveying and polls, community service programs for students, communication training, advisory committees, volunteers, writing and speaking, publications, alumni associations, foundations, mentoring, photography, and related topics.

The overall goal of the *Journal* is to support efforts to enhance/foster student achievement and staff productivity, and to provide information to build public knowledge of the value and potential benefits of a sound basic education of our youth. We advocate the concept that the school public relations function must be based on fact and reality as compared to ideals and goals of educators and the community at large.

Style

Scholarly articles can be prepared following style guidelines of the publication manual of the American Psychological Association, **with these exceptions:**

1. **Do not** place last names of authors being cited and the year *within* the text. Number citations sequentially in the text; provide usual citations in **references following the article.**

2. Before the start of the article, include a summary of the scope and major findings of the article in one paragraph.

We encourage you to include photographs, drawings, and tables as appropriate.

Submissions

- Submit four copies of a manuscript with a letter from the author(s).
- Articles should be 1,000 to 3,500 words in length.
- If produced on a computer, supply a disk, clearly labeled, in ASCII format, IBM format only, with the text copies.
- Include an abstract of the article and a two-three sentence credit for each author on a separate sheet.
- Advise if the article has been published or is being considered elsewhere.
- Queries for articles on specific topics are welcomed.
- SASE. Include a #10 self-addressed, stamped envelope for acknowledgement of receipt of your article. Include a 9" x 12" similar envelope for reply to submissions or queries.
- Response to an article or a query is usually conveyed to an author within 60 days.

Address manuscripts and correspondence to Albert E. Holliday, Editor and Publisher, Journal of Educational Relations, 1830 Walnut St., Camp Hill, PA 17011. 717-761-6620.

Previous *Journals* are available in microfilm from University Microfilm Int., 300 Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Refer to *Journal of Educational Communications* (1975-83), *Journal of Educational Public Relations* (1984-95) and *Journal of Educational Relations* (1995-).

Albert E. Holliday, Editor-Publisher
Journal of Educational Relations
P.O. Box 657
Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #152
Camp Hill, PA 17011

Listen Up!

A Two-Minute PR Drill

I had a scary nightmare. I came back in my next life as PR director for a school district. Again.

My first task was to figure out what to do differently this time, as compared to the previous experience.

But I found that my decision was easy. For this go 'round, I'd start by spending my first month traveling to all our schools and service centers (like the bus garage). I'd ask questions of teachers and principals and specialists and blue collar people.

I'd ask and then listen. I'd want to learn:

- What do they think people in school do best? Where do we need to improve?
- What do they like best about their job?
- What complaints do they have? What stands in their way to be as effective as they are able? As a teacher? Custodian? Principal?
- What would an ideal school-community relations program look like to them?
- What could I do to help them and their fellow workers?

Ask and listen. At least a month. And keep taking copious notes.

Hearing their individual likes and dislikes and their statements of blame and praise would help me learn their beliefs and attitudes.

I'd want to start building our district's PR on what they had to tell me. I think this approach would go a long way in helping me and our school staff develop a successful program.

Al Holliday
Journal Editor

The Journal of Educational RELATIONS

ED 027284

42

Promoting student achievement through positive school-home-community relationships Vol 19 No 2 2nd Quarter 1998

Proposal Pending to Study School-Community Relations Training/Requirements

A professor in Florida was telling me the other day of a fine course in school-community relations he teaches for educators and administrators. Trouble is, he says, it is an elective and his peers don't see the need to make it a required course.

Ted Kowalski has studied principals and finds that few of them took communication coursework in college, although now many wish they did (see this issue's lead article).

Subscribers should recall our monograph issue (Vol. 18, No. 1) devoted to the Project Public Information conference in 1967. Participants even then decried the scarcity of preparation programs in the field of public information (the terms I use now are communication or school-community relations). Few courses were offered, and hardly any were required for a superintendent's certificate from state departments of education—way back in 1967.

What is the present status of higher education training—required or elective—and what do State Education Agencies require in the area of communication training before an administrator can be certified, **in the present year of 1998?**

That is the focus of a national study we have proposed. The intention is to survey all (some 700) college of education deans or chairs to learn what is taught (required or elective) in the communication area. And we will ask SEA representatives what is *required* in the area of school-community relations before one can be certified as an administrator.

We plan to collect statements of model programs and requirements on both levels, and also to learn what services (workshops, resource publications, etc.) SEAs provide for district administrators and staff in communication areas.

Our plan is to publish monographs of status reports (higher education, SEA), recommended coursework/preparation and suggested SEA policy requirements and distribute these monograph reports widely among educational leaders and authorities.

The $67,000 project is to be financed through the Foundation for the Advancement of Education, and will require a 16-18 month period of operation.

We'll be pleased to send the funding proposal to anyone on request. Also, we would appreciate being advised of foundations and associations whose officials might consider this project worthy of funding.

Al Holliday

Al Holliday
Editor-Publisher

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Vol. 19, No. 2
2nd Quarter 1998

IFC Editor's Column

4 **Communication in Principalship**—Preparation, work experience and expectation. *By Theodore J. Kowalski.*

13 **Community Service Required for Maryland Students**—How students have responded in one school. *Coordinated by Kathy A. Megyeri.*

19 **Are You Ready for a Referendum?** Eight questions to ask before putting *the* question on the ballot. *By Debi S. Edmund.*

26 **Communication Challenges at Milton Hershey School**—Relating to internal/external audiences has priority at this well-endowed school in Pennsylvania. *By Linda L. Miller.*

33 **Case Study—Where Does Allegiance Lie?** A principal faces a test of his professional ethics. *By David M. Denny.*

36 **Case Study Response**—Two wrong decisions never make a situation right. *By Stephen L. Stark.*

39 **Book Reviews:** Educational marketing, a family/school handbook for action, strategies for community involvement, and making the right first impression. *Edited by Art Steller.*

IBC Contributor Guidelines

BC Great Words to Live By

Cover photo by
Michael Siluk
New Brighton, MN

Subscription Service:
questions,
renewals,
new orders,
change of address,
Call toll-free:
800-537-2624.
Outside U.S.
(717) 766-0574
EDITORIAL CALL:
(717) 761-6620

RELATIONS-The Journal of Educational Relations—ISSN 0741-3653
Editor-in-chief: Albert E. Holliday
Associate Editor: Joan M. Holliday
Book reviews: Arthur W. Steller
Case studies/Research: Philip T. West

The Journal of Educational Relations is published quarterly by the Educational Communication Center, Box 657, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657. Telephone 717-761-6620.
Copyright 1998.
Subscriptions: Individual rate, $48 per year. Single copy, $15. Library rate, $60 per year. Single copy, $20. Add $4 for subscriptions outside of the United States. Payment in U.S. funds.

Periodicals postage paid at Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Journal of Educational Relations*, P.O. Box 657, Camp Hill PA 17001-0657.

Communications in the Principalship–

Preparation, Work Experiences and Expectations

by Theodore J. Kowalski

In this age of information, educational leaders should be able to access and use information effectively to address the problems they face in their work. These expectations include engaging in two-way communication with their audiences and using modern technologies.

A connection between communication skills and effective practice in school administration has been established by a growing number of studies.[11, 12] But despite the recognized value of communication skills in educational leadership, relatively little is known about the manner in which, and the extent to which, principals become proficient in this area. Even less is known about the role of communication-related activities in the work lives of school principals.

This article is a summary of a study conducted among a group of Indiana elementary and secondary school principals. Purposes of the research were to gather the following information: (a) their educational preparation in communication; (b) the extent to which they used computers, especially for communication purposes; (c) the pervasiveness of communication in their work; (d) the dynamic nature of their communication experiences of the past three years; (e) the accuracy of their perceptions about the role of communication when they first entered administrative work.

Background

More than 30 years ago, Project Public Information, a national project dedicated to strengthening public information programs and services in state departments of education, held a national conference to examine the role of communication in school administration. The distinguished educators and administrators who participated concluded that there was a need to prepare school-community relations specialists, and to prepare principals and superintendents who would be reasonably proficient in communication and community relations. Three decades later, former PPI associate director Albert Holliday[2] observed that colleges and universities still lacked a consistent approach for attaining these goals. In large measure, this inertia is because states rarely address communication skills in their licensing requirements for administrators–requirements that have an obvious influence on the content of graduate study in this specialization.

While concern about inadequate academic preparation in communication are not new, they are more disconcerting today than ever before. In part, this is because the pace of change in an age of information is much more rapid than it was in a manufacturing society; new technologies have made it possible for school officials and educators

to respond rather quickly to emerging needs and problems.[4] Today, tools such as computers, new software, electronic mail and Internet search engines have simultaneously provided the potential to make a principal's life easier and to make it more challenging.[9] Consequently, members in the school-community expect principals to manage information more comprehensively and efficiently than they did in the past.

There are myriad reasons why administrators need to be effective communicators. Two of the most obvious are the need to recapture **public confidence** and the need to accomplish **school reform**.

With regard to **public confidence**, many taxpayers, especially those who do not have children enrolled in the schools, are indifferent or negative with respect to supporting public education. Even worse, some believe that the quality of public education has been seriously eroded over the years. Often these taxpayers play an influential role in determining levels of political and economic support for local schools.

With regard to **school reform**, the acceptance of decentralization theory in which principals have expanded authority and responsibility, is creating new roles for them. This is especially evident with respect to providing leadership and facilitation for professional and democratic cultures, a goal that relies heavily on effective communication within a school. In part this is because open communication is essential for acquiring employee commitments to new ideas [1] and essential to a professional climate in which educators work together and learn from each other.[10] A study conducted among teachers and principals found that, in the context of shared decision-making, both groups of educators identified effective communication as a principal's most important skill.[5] Other studies have suggested a more direct association between communication and the successful implementation of change.[7]

Likewise, there are multiple reasons why principals should be computer literate; two of the most important are **efficiency** and **credibility**. As Ralph Kimbrough and Charles Burkett[4] noted, "Principals who have knowledge of and use computers are usually perceived as leaders; they are seen as being on the cutting edge of what is going on in education." Often administrators fail to recognize the extent to which parents, teachers, students, school board members, and representatives of the media rely on them for understanding what is happening in schools. The overall demands for information can be overwhelming. In the final analysis, contemporary practice in school administration involves the integration of information needs with computer technology[8] –an objective that requires principals to understand both the capabilities and limitations of modern technologies.[6]

The absence of a consistent approach to studying communication across all school

Table 1
Completion of Courses on Communication and Computer Use

	Percent of Principals Responding			
	1 course	More Than 1 Course	No Courses	No Response
Communication				
Undergraduate	31.9%	25.9%	41.6%	0.0%
Graduate	25.4%	19.5%	54.6%	0.0%
Computer Use				
Undergraduate	5.9%	6.5%	85.9%	1.7%
Graduate	16.8%	18.9%	63.8%	0.0%

administration programs indicates that principals enter their leadership roles with varying degrees of competency in interpersonal relationships and communication. Many first-year principals are often surprised to discover how much of their work day is consumed by human interactions, both within and outside the school. This includes devoting a considerable amount of time working with the media and community groups.[3] This revelation must be especially disconcerting for those who enter administration with marginal communication skills.

Description of the Study

In an effort to broaden the knowledge base about principal proficiencies in communication, a study was conducted among the principals in the member districts of the Indiana Public School Study Council. This consortium of 25 of the larger districts in the state has been in existence for nearly 40 years. The districts are spread across the state and their geographic locations include larger cities, suburbs, and predominately rural all-county districts. The council members maintain a reputation as being among the most innovative school districts in Indiana.

The following research questions were generated for the study:

1. To what extent have principals engaged in the study of communication?
2. To what extent do principals use computers in their work, and to what extent do they use this technology to communicate with others?
3. How pervasive is communication-related activities in the work of principals?
4. Have communication-related experiences in the principalship changed in the past three years?
5. Did principals accurately estimate the extent to which communication would be pervasive in their work?

Surveys were mailed to all 342 principals constituting the population for this study. Principals were assured of confidentiality, and the completed surveys were returned via mail to the researcher. A total of 185 usable surveys were returned, a return rate of 54%. Data were collected in the fall of 1997, and results were tabulated at a university computing center.

Outcomes

Nearly two-thirds (61%) of the principals returning surveys were males; and just over two-thirds (65%) were elementary school principals. Only 15% of the principals had less than 3 years of experience in the principalship, and 70% reported they had completed their highest academic degree more than 7 years prior

Table 2
Use of Computers

	Percent of Principals Responding			
	not at all	infrequently	moderately	frequently
Extent of using computer at work	0.0%	6.5%	20.0%	73.0%
Extent of using computer to communicate	2.2%	9.2%	22.2%	66.5%

to this study; only 14% had a doctorate.

Considerable variance existed among the principals with respect to their having completed either undergraduate or graduate courses in communication. Approximately half reported not having had such a course. An even higher percentage reported not having had a course in using computers. The outcomes for both the undergraduate and graduate experiences are shown in Table 1. The principals also were asked to identify the extent to which communication skills were discussed in their **graduate courses** in school administration. Again, the outcome showed that their experiences were uneven; the responses were as follows: extensively–18%, moderately–51%, very rarely–28%, not at all–3%.

Data also were collected with respect to the number of days of staff development in communication they completed over the past three years. Results were as follows: 4 or more days–39%, 2 to 4 days–25%, less than 2 days–26% and none–9%.

In summary, the principals exhibited considerable differences with respect to their formal learning experiences in communication. This was true for special courses, content within school administration courses, and staff development.

Differences in educational experiences in communication may partially explain why principals enter practice with varying perspectives about the extent to which communication will occupy their time. In response to a question regarding this perception prior to entering administration, 49% indicated that the extent of communication-related activities was **more** than they had anticipated; only 1% said it was **less** than expected; the other 50% indicated that the level was as they **had expected**. Eighteen principals did not respond to this item, because they had just entered the principalship a couple of months prior to the study.

With respect to computer usage, the principals identified the extent to which they used this tool in their work and the extent to which the tool was used for communication purposes. Results for these two issues are in Table 2. As these data reveal, the vast majority of principals relied on computers and used them as a communication device. The **most experienced principals** (i.e., those with 8 or more years of experience in the principalship), however, reported **lower levels** of computer usage than did lesser experienced principals. In addition, elementary school principals were much more **likely to use** a computer frequently to communicate than were **secondary** school principals.

Communication, as expected, was found to be a pervasive activity among these principals. Only 7% of them indicated that communication consumed less than 26% of their work day. Looking back over the past three years, 84% of the principals indicated that the amount of time they were devoting to communication-related activities was **increasing** (principals with less than 3 years

Table 3
Communication Activities by Classifications of People

	Percent of Principals Responding			
	Under 5%	5-15%	16-25%	over 25%
Percentage of communication with:				
Students	6.5%	15.1%	37.3%	40.5%
Teachers	1.6%	2.2%	18.4%	77.8%
Non-Teacher Employees	9.2%	37.3%	38.4%	15.1%
Parents	5.9%	19.5%	44.9%	29.7%
Supervisor(s)	25.9%	48.1%	18.4%	7.6%

of experience did not answer this question). Reflecting on that same time period, 93% of the principals reported that the nature of their communication experiences also was changing; 68% responded that these experiences were "somewhat different," and 25% responded that they were "quite different."

Many of the principals recognized that communication problems were a source of **conflict** in their work. In response to a question about the extent to which communication problems generated conflict, 47% of the principals answered "occasionally," 38% answered "regularly," and 10% answered "constantly." Females were more likely to see communication problems as a regular or constant source of conflict.

The principals also were asked to identify people with whom they interacted. This was accomplished by having them indicate the percentage of their communication that occurred with students, teachers, non-teacher employees, parents, and supervisors. Results for these items are shown in Table 3. These results indicate that the principals spent more time communicating with teachers and students than they did with parents, other employees, or supervisors. However, the outcomes also verify that principals regularly communicate with people in all of these groups.

Discussion and Conclusions

The principals participating in this study were employed in larger school districts that typically had higher salaries and more favorable working conditions than most other districts in Indiana. Thus, criteria for principal employment in these districts are usually high.

• **University preparation**. Despite this fact, it appears that a large percentage of the principals, maybe as high as 50%, **have never had a university course in communication**. Additionally, considerable differences were found with respect to their exposure to communication in school administration courses and in staff development experiences. These findings support the contention that preparation programs still lack a consistent approach to integrating this knowledge into preservice academic preparation and the contention that principals possess varying levels of communication skills.

• **Use of computers**. Every participating principal reported using a computer at some level; less than 7% reported their level of usage as "infrequent." These data verify that the computer has indeed become central to work in the principalship. Further, about 7 in 10 principals reported using the computer frequently to communicate with others.

• **Time devoted to communication.** Most principals (93%) believed the commu-

nication-related activities consumed more than one-fourth of their work day; nearly 80% responded that these experiences consumed more than 40% of their work. Also nearly three-quarters of the principals believed that the time they devoted to communication had increased in the last three years, and nearly 90% said that the nature of their communication experiences were either somewhat or quite different than they were just three years ago. These findings coupled with the outcomes concerning computer usage support the common belief that technology and life in an age of information have combined to require principals to devote an increasing amount of their time in communication and interpersonal relationships. Nevertheless, about half of the participating principals reported that they had **underestimated** the extent to which communication would be pervasive in their work when they first entered administration.

• **Licensing and university curriculum issues.** In addressing the need to make communication a more essential component of professional preparation, those seeking change should focus on the connection between state licensing requirements and curriculum in professional preparation programs. Unless educators are required to complete courses in communication theory to obtain an administrative license, universities are not likely to move in this direction; competition for students makes many educational leadership professors reluctant to increase degree requirements. And although staff development (or training on the job sometime after a principal was employed) should be an integral part of communication education, certain communication proficiencies are needed immediately upon entering the principalship.

• **Additional topics to be researched.** Given the importance of communication to the principal's work, and given the fact that communication-related experiences are

increasing and dynamic, the less-than-uniform exposure to communication and computer knowledge should be a primary concern for principal preparation. Many questions pertaining to this topic remain to be answered. They can be divided broadly into three categories: questions related to academic **study** of communication; questions related to communication **problems**; and questions related to perceived **proficiency**.

In the first group, academic **study**, are questions such as these:

–What communication topics are being addressed in courses on school administration? To what extent are they being addressed?

–To what extent do preparation programs require proficiency in communication and computer usage?

–What are the foci for staff development programs in this area? To what extent do staff development programs complement professional preparation programs?

In the second group, communication **problems**, are questions such as these:

–In what ways are communication experiences in the principalship changing?

–What types of communication problems are common to the principalship?

–How is communication in schools changing?

And in the final group, perceived **proficiency**, are questions such as these:

–To what extent are principals evaluated with respect to their competencies in communication and computer usage?

–How do students, teachers, parents, and others perceive the communication skills of principals?

–How does leadership communication affect the overall performance of a school?

Answering these and related questions may help to diminish the long-standing gap between the communication realities of practice in school administration and the extent to which aspiring administrators are prepared for those realities.

Theodore J. Kowalski is a former school superintendent and former dean of Teacher College, Ball State University, where he is now professor (Muncie, Indiana 47306). He is editor of *Public Relations in Educational Organizations* (Merrill-Prentice Hall), which is now in revision for the second edition.

References

1. Holdaway, E. A., & Genge, A. (1995.) How effective superintendents understand their own work. In K. Leithwood (Ed.), *Effective school district leadership: Transforming politics into education* (pp. 13-32). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

2. Holliday, A.E. (1997). Notes from the editor. *Journal of Educational Relations*. 18(1), inside cover. The PPI conference was held in Palo Alto, California, in late 1967.

3. Hughes, L.W., & Ubben, G.C. (1994). *The elementary principal's handbook: A guide to effective action* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

4. Kimbrough, R.B., & Burkett, C.W. (1990). *The principalship: Concepts and practices*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

5. Kowalski, T.J., Reitzug, U.C., McDaniel, P., & Otto, D. (1992). Perceptions of desired skills for effective principals. *Journal of School Leadership, 2* (3), 299-309.

6. Mecklenburger, J.A. (1989). Technology in the 1990s: Ten secrets for success. *Principal, 69* (2), 6-8.

7. Musella, D. (1995). How CEOs influence school system culture. In K. Leithwood (Ed.), *Effective school district leadership: Transforming politics into education* (pp. 223-244). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

8. Picciano, A.G. (1998). *Educational leadership and planning for technology*. Upper Saddle, NJ: Prentice Hall, Merrill.

9. Roberts, P.A. (1997). What administrators need to know about technology. *Principal, 76* (3), 20-22.

10. Sergiovanni, T.J. (1996). *Leadership for the schoolhouse: How is it different? Why is it important?* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

11. Walker, J.E. (1990). The skills of exemplary principals. *NASSP Bulletin, 74* (524), 48-55.

12. Wendel, F.C., Hoke, F.A., & Joekel, R.G. (1996). *Outstanding school administrators: Their keys to success*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Instrument used for the survey of principals.

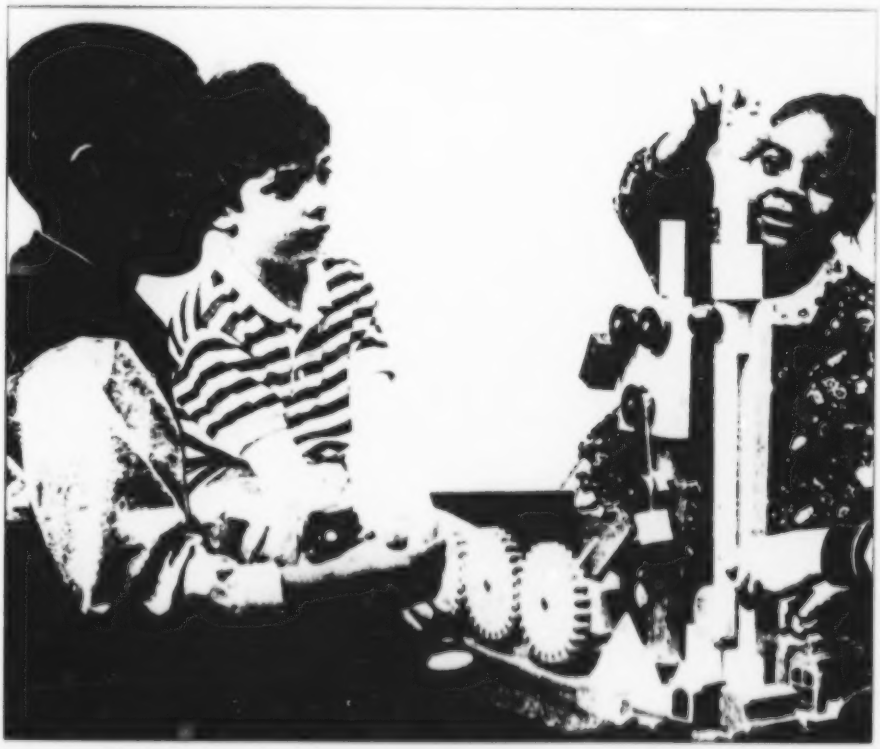
Instructions: Please draw a circle around the letter preceding your response to each question. Place the completed survey form in the envelope provided and mail. Thank you for your assistance.

1. Have you completed a course(s) focusing on communication skills at the undergraduate level?
   a. yes, 1 course b. yes, more than 1 course c. no
2. Have you completed a course(s) focusing on communication skill at the graduate level?
   a. yes, 1 course b. yes, more than 1 course c. no
3. Have you completed a course(s) focusing on using computers at the undergraduate level?
   a. yes, 1 course b. yes, more than 1 course c. no
4. Have you completed a course(s) focusing on using computers at the graduate level?
   a. yes, 1 course b. yes, more than 1 course c. no
5. To what extent were communication skills discussed in you graduate courses on school administration?
   a. not at all b.very rarely c. moderately d. extensively
6. Which of the following best describes the extent to which you use a computer in your work?
   a. not at all b.very rarely c. moderately d. extensively
7. Which of the following best describes the extent to which you use a computer to communicate with others while performing your duties as principal?
   a. not at all b.very rarely c. moderately d. extensively
8. Which of the following best describes the percentage of your average work day consumed by communication-related activities?
   a. less than 10% b.11 to 25% c. 26 to 40% d. 41% or more
9. Compared to three years ago, has the percentage of your average work day consumed by communication-related activities changed? (If you were not a principal three years ago, select '...t applicable.')
   a. not applicable b. yes, it has decreased c. yes, it has increased d. no
10. Compared to three years ago, how different are the types of communication activities you experience as principal? (If you were not a principal three years ago, select 'not applicable.')
   a. not applicable b.not at all different c. somewhat different d. quite different
11. In the past three years, what has been the extent of your participation in staff development or inservice activities that focused on communication?
   a. none b. less than 2 days c. 2 to 4 days d. 4 or more days
12. What percentage of communication activities related to your work occurs with students?
   a. under 5% b. 5-15% c. 16-25% d. over 25%
13. What percentage of communication activities related to your work occurs with teachers?
   a. under 5% b. 5-15% c. 16-25% d. over 25%
14. What percentage of communication activities related to your work occurs with non-teacher employees?
   a. under 5% b. 5-15% c. 16-25% d. over 25%
15. What percentage of communication activities related to your work occurs with parents?
   a. under 5% b. 5-15% c. 16-25% d. over 25%
16. What percentage of communication activities related to your work occurs with your supervisor(s)?
   a. under 5% b. 5-15% c. 16-25% d. over 25%
17. During your first year as a principal, how would you describe the extent to which you had to engage in communication related activities? (If this is your first year as a principal, select 'not applicable.')
   a. not applicable b. less than expected c. as expected d. more than expected
18. In your work, how often is conflict generated by communication problems that occur between or among people?
   a. almost never b. occasionally c. regularly d. constantly

Demographic Data:

19. Sex
   a. male b.female
20. Academic Preparation-Highest Earned Degree
   a. master's b. specialist c. doctorate
21. Level of Principalship (If employed in a jr/sr high school, select high school.)
   a. elementary school b. middle/jr high school c. high school
22. Years of Experience as a Principal
   a. less than 3 years b. 3-7 years c. 8 or more years
23. Number of Years Since Completing Highest Academic Degree
   a. less than 3 years b. 3-7 years c. 8 or more years

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



Its what you learn after you know it all that counts.

John Wooden

Community Service Required for Maryland Students

How Students Have Responded in One School

Coordinated by Kathy A. Megyeri

Since 1993, Maryland students have been required to perform 75 hours of community service to qualify for high school graduation.

Kathy A. Megyeri is volunteer coordinator at Sherwood High School, Sandy Spring. For an article in *Partnership Progressions*, Kathy expressed her concern about how the required program has developed, and suggested that a number of issues must be addressed for the program to be improved, including:

1. **Uniformity**–In the state's 24 school districts, officials define what constitutes service quite differently. In some, painting lines in parking lots is adequate. State officials need to refine requirements.

2. **Teacher training**–many teachers consider the service as an "add-on." They should integrate service topics into their own subjects.

3. **Liability**–coordination must ensure that students are covered by an insurance policy at the site of service. However, liability for transportation of students is a continuing issue and concern.

4. **Exemptions**–the state does not exempt students who may be handicapped or who are recent immigrants (who cannot speak English).

At the request of the *Journal of Educational Relations* editor, Kathy has supplied the following reports of students who have completed their service projects.

Service Project:

Stuffed Animal Collection

by Jennifer Packard

At the beginning of the school year, our teacher in our community service class showed us a video called "Shelter Boy." It was about a family who ended up homeless because a tornado destroyed their home and belongings. The little boy of the family told how kids at school picked on him and called him "Shelter Boy." He said that his only friends were his stuffed animals.

At the end of the movie, I was crying because I still have my stuffed animals from when I was a baby. That's when fellow student Jill Kenney and I came up with the idea of a stuffed animal drive at school. We knew that some teenagers' rooms are filled with animals they would part with, and we also knew some parents and local businesses had new stuffed animals they could donate.

Jennifer Packard and Jill Kenney comfort a child at a homeless shelter where many of the stuffed animals collected at school were given to children.

To reach almost all of the 2,000 students in our school, we made a video that was shown in each class. It featured a clip of Richard, the boy from the movie, and we asked some of the kids in the school to describe what their favorite animal from childhood was, what it meant to them, and how, now, they would be willing to part with it for the sake of the shelters. We had the captain of the football team, the cheerleaders, and the homecoming queen, the basketball stars and even the vice-principal talk about their animals. We set boxes around the school and solicited donations between Thanksgiving and Christmas. We collected over 50 brand-new animals and 200 slightly used animals, and gave them to homeless shelters in our area. The response from the shelters has been so positive that our Stuffed Animal drive was featured in the local newspaper. It was such a pleasure to discover that the students who take the service-learning class can come up with their own projects, carry them out, and be successful outside the school's curriculum.

Project:

Reading and Writing with Elementary Students

by Amanda Virkus

Some of us in the community service class volunteered to read and write with second graders in a nearby elementary school. Once a week, we would take our favorite children's books over to the school and read to the students; *The Velveteen Rabbit*, *Where the Red Fern Grows*, *The Giving Tree*, and *Charlotte's Web* were some examples. The school's reading teacher gave us suggestions on good books to take along and the local librarian gave us pointers on effective ways to read aloud. Also, we wrote our own stories of fiction after conferring with our little partners on plot, setting, characters, theme and dialogue. The second graders illustrated the stories, we wrote a dedication to one another for the front page, and we bound the book together to be kept in the school library.

Amanda Virkus reads to a second grader. Her project helped Amanda understand youngsters and reinforced her goal to become a teacher.

I got involved because I want to be an elementary school teacher. I also remember that, when I was in second grade, a high school student read to me a book about butterflies, and I still remember the story, so if it made an impact on me....

From this program, I gained a better understanding of young children and what interests them. I also improved my own writing ability and made a friend with a young child who idolized me. This project lets the children know that people in their community as well as their future high school care about them. It also spread the idea that reading is important. Every second of the time I put into writing my story was worthwhile. The proud smile on my little friend's face when she made up her very own story made it all worth it.

Project:

Helping the handicapped

by Scott Burton

Do all your friends look the same? Do all your friends walk, talk, and act the same? More than likely, the answer is **no**. But you consider them your friends nonetheless.

Why do most people tend to shy away from the physically challenged and mentally handicapped? These young men and women are human beings just like you and me and deserve the same treatment the "normal high school students" expect and receive.

Before I began working with these students everyday, I too felt ill at ease around most of them. But now that I've spent some time with them I feel truly fortunate to work with these wonderful people. Every day when I leave for school, I look forward to seeing and spending time with my friends. It gives me such a strong feeling to know that I can make such a difference in

Scott Burton worked with physically challenged young people and feels fortunate for the experience.

their lives by just being their friend. Each time I walk into the classroom, their faces light up and they rush to greet me. Most of them say "Hello" with a handshake or a "high five." Some of my friends, however, must wait for me to come see them because they are confined to a wheelchair.

One particular wheelchair student is one of my friends in the class. He is completely paralyzed from the waist down and has been in a chair all his life. Every morning when he gets off his bus, I ask him how he is doing and how is the weather. Regardless of his bleak situation and regardless of the weather, he always replies, "It's a beautiful day outside." A smile is always on his face; he knows that he will probably be in this condition for the rest of his life, yet he always manages to see the bright side of everything. The rest of us could learn about positive attitudes from my best friend. Do yourself a favor: get to know these wonderful people as I have, and you will appreciate every day of your life even more.

Brad Widner and Tom Perlet are youth community service advocates and appear before classes of elementary students to urge them to start their own service projects.

Project:

Train Tomorrow's Youth for Service

by Tom Perlet and Brad Widner

Every month we travel to nearby elementary schools in Maryland to teach fourth and fifth graders the importance of community service. We make younger pupils aware of the importance of community service and the opportunities available to them; as a result, we believe they will complete their required service learning hours earlier and continue to form the habit of service that may last after graduation and for the rest of their lives. They need to know at an early age that service can be fun and that scholarship and award money is available through corporations and community agencies. Through games and group projects that we both present, students learn teamwork, self-esteem, motivation and leadership skills.

For example, last year we showed the kids just how much service they were already performing that they weren't even aware of; i.e., one little girl helped at her church, and a boy helped his elderly neighbors with yard work. Others had donated canned foods to the homeless. Young kids listen to us more than to teachers, parents or adults because we are closer to their age and can give them service ideas that are both fun and educational without "preaching" to them. A week after we spoke to a class, one boy came up to me and told us that our presentation had encouraged him to rake leaves for his neighbor who was in the hospital. Then we knew our training had had an impact on tomorrow's leaders.

Project:

Teach Others About Fire Safety

by Matt Dewhirst and Matt Gorman

We are both volunteers at Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department in Sandy Spring, Maryland. In October during National Fire Prevention Week, an elementary school teacher called and asked for someone to talk about fire safety and prevention. So we put together a presentation, and it was so successful that other teachers began to call and request to have us come to their schools as well. This became our project in community service class to meet the high school requirement. We began to get coverage from the local paper and school newspaper, and then local television station WRC-TV (Channel 9 in Washington, D.C.) featured us on the series "Everyday A Hero." The producer of the show, Joan Roskosh, said we showed an amazing amount of maturity, self-confidence and a sense of purpose far beyond our years.

Reaching out to the elementary school children was truly rewarding. We tried to teach most second graders not to fear firefighters with all their equipment on; even though they look scary, they just want to help. We teach them how to properly call 911, what to do in case of fire, where most fires start in the home, the dangers of playing with matches and fireworks, the importance of smoke detectors, establishing an outside meeting place in the event of a fire, and we even let them put on our 25 pounds of gear, if they can, and demonstrate proper use of the equipment. With so many children home alone after school, we need to make sure they know how to get help if there is an emergency. Because of our work, we were nominated for the Governor's Service Award and, eventually, we want to attend the fire academy in Emmitsburg to become professional firefighters.

Matt Dewhirst and Matt Gorman travel to elementary schools to tell students about fire prevention and how to respond in a fire emergency.

Project:

Writing with Senior Citizens

by Natalie Irvine

Our high school received a grant of $1,175 from Maryland Humanities Council and a matching $1,000 grant from the National Writing Project in Berkeley, California, for teens to work together with a group of senior citizens in a writing project. At first, the teens and the seniors gathered to meet each other and find out the others' interests. What surprised us is that so many elders had poetry and essays tucked away that they had never shared with anyone before. We were able to find out about the elders' first dates, their first cars, their school memories, their remembrances of their wedding day and high school graduation, their favorite foods, their first job, etc. Then, we encouraged the seniors to write

mini-autobiographies that we would type, edit and bind and present to their families as a lasting gift. We helped them write essays and poems they could include. One lady wrote of a sleigh-riding adventure where young people saved her life after the sleigh tipped over and threw her out. Another lady wrote a poem about her church that was eventually published in her church's weekly bulletin. I remember her telling me that people "don't get old; they just get older." We were amazed that they all had such good stories to relate. In some cases, we vidotaped their reading of a work and presented that video to the family. Writing with them was certainly more fulfilling than meeting with them a couple of times and doing crafts together. Now, their families have something to remember them by, and we teens believe that we received useful practice in editing and writing, which helped us in our composition classes. We would certainly recommend this project to others.

Project:

Translation of Documents

by Rocio Borda

For the last few months I had been translating booklets from English to Spanish for Montgomery General Hospital. I took a few hours from my everyday time and worked with them as hard as I could. I really liked to be involved in this program although I found it kind of hard because I was not very familiar with some of the terms used in the booklets to be translated. Some of the words that were in the booklet were not listed in the dictionary and I had to get some help from my teacher. I would probably get involved with something similar to this project in the future, and I'm sure I'll enjoy it as much as I enjoyed working for Montgomery General Hospital.

Background of Translation Program

by Kathy Megyeri, Volunteer Coordinator

We have found that our service-learning program offers special opportunities for the 260 pupils from 43 countries who represent 28 languages and are currently enrolled in our school's ESOL Program to become integrated into the school and community. Some ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) pupils in the advanced classes have committed themselves to translating the local hospital's booklets for patients about to have operations into Korean, Bengali, Spanish, and Russian. This project has been so successful that it is being shared with other hospitals in the area to meet the needs of our ever-increasing immigrant population. The student who translated the documents into Bengali even sent home to Bangladesh for a typewriter so that her translation would look polished enough to be printed. All involved have reflected on the program, especially the many hours devoted to the project, but they agreed that their time and efforts were well spent because they felt that others of their nationality benefited and appreciated reading such work in their native language.

We are presently applying for funding to send the translations to the printers to be finished in booklet form.

Contact Kathy at 300 Olney-Sandy Spring Rd., Sandy Spring, MD 20860. 301-924-3235. *Partnership Progressions* is the monthly newsletter of the National Assn. of Partners in Education (published at 901 N. Pitt., Alexandria, VA 22314. 703-836-4880).

Are you ready for a referendum?

Eight questions to ask before you put *the* question on the ballot.

by Debi S. Edmund

Our population is aging, and fewer people have school-age children. Economic uncertainty and rising taxes have combined to increase the number of tax resisters. School-bashing has become a popular national pastime, especially with media pundits and politicians. The good news is that school boards around the country can and do win school finance campaigns despite all these trends.

Polls indicate that the majority of Americans favor continued investment in education whether they have school-age children or not, and that most parents approve of the schools their own children attend. A recent NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll found that 68 percent of Americans support allocating increased federal resources to schools. According to a Metropolitan Life survey, nearly 80 percent of public school parents and 75 percent of students believe that their local schools provide an excellent or good education. In a recent Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll, 65 percent of parents gave the school their oldest child attends a grade of A or B.

William Seiple, managing director of LaSalle Capital Markets in Naperville, Ill. believes that even tax resistance can be overcome. "I work with school districts that are the wealthiest and those that are poorest," says Seiple, who has worked on more than 300 referendums since 1962. "It doesn't matter. Everyone thinks their taxes are too high. And they probably are." But campaigns that succeed "have tremendous community support. By that, I mean they had citizens involved who understood the need."

"Many people, even though they're resistant to having their taxes increased, also realize the importance of education," says Gayle Russell, co-owner with Janet English of Victory Campaigns Inc., a nonprofit corporation in St. Charles, Ill. that assists taxing bodies in passing referendums. "We're of the firm belief that voters are intelligent people and if they're educated properly about the issues, they will vote 'yes' for the referendum."

But a successful referendum does not happen by chance–preparation and planning are crucial. You need a sound public relations program, a well-organized campaign and the commitment of your community. While the campaign itself may only last 10 to 12 weeks, the overall planning and preparation process needs to begin long before the campaign.

Is your district ready for a referendum, or do you have some homework to do

first? Here are some critical questions a school board needs to answer before even considering putting the issue on the ballot.

Question 1: Is your school board united?

If it's not, you're in trouble already, say most experts, especially if some of your board members are actively opposed to the referendum. A study by the South Carolina School Boards Association found that split boards lost 70 percent of the time.

"A unified school board is not just important, it is an absolute must," warns Jeannie M. (Sissy) Henry, deputy executive director of the South Carolina School Boards Association and a nationally recognized authority on school finance campaigns. "I would recommend that you try very hard to reach some kind of consensus. If you can't, then you're going to have a tough battle, because the public feels that the board members have been privy to the best information that's out there. If you can't bring the board together, then it's very hard to sell it to the public."

Question 2: How do community residents feel about your schools?

"A referendum reflects a 'values' vote," Henry says. "A person's values are not going to change during a two-month campaign." A referendum has a much better chance of passing if your district already has a strong public relations program in place that helps the citizenry feel ownership of your schools. Citizens are suspicious of election-time-only public relations efforts.

"If the community's been having some problems, we'll suggest starting a year and a half in advance with some straight PR coming out of the school district," says Russell. "Not pro-referendum or anti-referendum, nothing to do with the referendum. We suggest a large, broad-scale good PR campaign to the community. Get those newsletters going. Invite people to the board meetings. Get the school in focus all the time in the newspaper. Really get out there and reach the community at large to tell them that yes, the kids are here."

Pay close attention to existing media coverage of your district as well. A clipping service can provide information about potential controversies in the community or alert you to the need to cultivate a better relationship with the press.

Question 3: How would the community feel about the referendum itself?

Unfortunately, there's no magic-bullet formula for predicting a referendum's passage or failure. But school boards can pick up some clues. Focus groups and opinion surveys can help you plan your public information programs, and often identify side issues and misperceptions that could affect your vote that must be addressed in your written materials and community presentations.

When Victory Campaigns Inc. does surveys, "we interview the administration, community members, the board members separately, we put all the information together and we tell them whether we think the referendum will pass and why it will or why it won't," Russell says. "We assess the weaknesses and strengths in the district. Then we try to get everyone together for a strategic planning session where they assess their own weaknesses and strengths."

"We like the focus group process the best because it gives us an opportunity to

meet with the public in a small group setting," Henry says. "Ours are always scripted. Outsiders come in and run them for us. The administration does not run the focus groups, so the people who are running them are neutral. Very often, the side issues that exist in the communities will surface."

Henry uses focus groups to put up trial balloons as well. "If there's part of the building program that doesn't seem to be as positively accepted as others, sometimes we'll encourage [the board] to split the ballot. We'll say that if you want to keep this in the package, we suggest your put it as an option."

If you use these tools, try to be as specific as possible with the questions you want answered, suggest Steve Larson, president of Illinois School Consulting Service and an independent public finance advisor who has worked on more than 75 referendums. "For example, would you be willing to pass a rate increase? Well, how much is the rate increase? Ten cents? Forty cents? In order for them to make an informed decision, people have to have the kind of information you're going to present in the referendum."

Question 4: Why do you need this money?

You have a far better chance of convincing your community to vote "yes" if you can clearly demonstrate your need for the money and your fiscal efficiency, have publicly explored and exhausted all other alternatives, and can show exactly where the money is going. "The plan should be very evident," Russell says. "You have to have an obvious need, and when you put out [informational campaign] material, that need has to just pop off the paper."

"If it's a building program, you should have enrollment studies and/or facility studies," Larson says. "If it's an operating

Seeking Help:

Should you hire a consultant?

School boards planning a referendum frequently ask, "What does a consultant do, and how do we know if we should hire one?"

Services rendered by consultants range from a one-time meeting to hands-on assistance with the entire campaign. The consultant may help your school board and administrators conduct facility or enrollment studies and put together a plan, recruit volunteers for your citizens' committee and make sure you stay within legal boundaries when providing public information about the referendum. The consultant may also advise your citizens' group on how to present seminars, speak to organizations, write and edit press releases and educational materials, design logos, raise funds and conduct get-out-the-vote activities.

"A consultant can play an advisory or a facilitative role," says Gayle Russell of Victory Campaigns Inc. "We can advise over the phone, or we can come to meetings, or we can directly become involved in your campaign. We can work on a package deal. It could be over a period of a year or we could work as little as four or five weeks for somebody."

Perhaps the most important thing a good consultant brings to a referendum campaign is experience–the consultants we interviewed for these articles have each worked on dozens of campaigns. Because of this experience, a consultant can help you spot potential pitfalls you might not otherwise be aware of.

William Seiple of LaSalle Capital Markets believes most school districts

Continued on page 23.

What is excellent public relations?

While experts may disagree on the fine points of a school finance campaign, they are nearly unanimous on one point. Almost every successful referendum starts with a well-established, ongoing public relations program.

"The success of a referendum isn't determined at the time you go for a referendum; it may be determined five years before the referendum," says Steve Larson of Illinois School Consulting Service. "It depends on how the public perceives you all the time, rather than just when you want to ask for money."

"Constant PR is vital," says Gayle Russell of Victory Campaigns Inc. "It can defuse problems really fast. It keeps everybody aware of what's happening in the schools." Unfortunately, when school boards have to cut budgets, many think public relations is "the one thing they can't afford. And yet, they really truly can't afford not to have somebody doing it, even if it's on a part-time basis or on a per-hour basis."

Obviously, a district with 500 students in grades K-12 will have different staffing and budgetary needs than a district with 10,000 kids. But good public relations programs have several components in common, whether your school is large or small. According to the National School Public Relations Association, effective PR programs are well thought out, communicate internally as well as externally, rely on a variety of methods to get your message across, and include accountability. Here are some key ingredients:

Continued on page 24.

rate referendum, you should have a financial plan showing the need for these operating funds." Adds Seiple, "The program has to be educationally sound, financially sound and meet the wishes of the public."

Involving the community in the needs assessment process can greatly improve your credibility as well. "The thing we've found to be very valuable is citizen involvement in the decision-making process," Larson says. "People have different opinions based on what they perceive the problems and need to be."

Internally, make sure principals, teachers, parent-teacher organizations and other staff understand the need for the referendum. "Often voters go to district employees–teachers and support staff–to ask their opinions if they are undecided on how to vote," Henry says.

Question 5: Is the timing right?

"Try to make the timing good for your community," Russell says. "We don't advise people running referendums at the same time there's another taxing body running a referendum in their district. Try to be the only one on the ballot. You don't want to run a referendum after a major industry has shut down in you community and people are scrambling for jobs." Timing may also be a problem if other taxing bodies or a neighboring school district have recently suffered failed referendums. If you have recently lost a campaign yourself, the consultants suggest you take sufficient time to study what happened and find out what needs to change before you try again.

Question 6: Who are your supporters?

Make a concerted effort to identify potential "yes" voters. In many communities, these voters typically include

well-educated individuals, business and professional people, individuals with higher incomes, parents of preschool and school-age children, recent high school graduates, women and nonwhite voters. Your citizens' committee will want to make sure your supporters are registered to vote, make sure college students have absentee ballots where needed, and be ready to offer transportation and baby-sitting services, if necessary, to get these people to the polls.

While experts generally agree that seeking to convert entrenched "no" voters is a waste of time, don't automatically assume that people will vote "no" simply because they don't have kids in school, Russell points out. Community and civic leaders know that excellent schools attract responsible, long-term residents to the community. Businesses know that economic growth is more likely in communities perceived to have excellent schools, and both senior citizens and realtors know that property values improve. Senior citizens may also have grandchildren in school. Therefore, all citizens benefit whether they have school-age children or not.

Question 7: Have you identified opponents and side issues?

"Side issues can kill you," Henry says. "We have found it is not a tax increase most of the time that defeats bond referendums. It is a side issue. It might be a teacher's dismissal. It might be union negotiations. It might be school sites. All kinds of issues. I hate to say it's not hard to figure out whether it's going to win or lose, but very often, you can see that."

Some clues that your referendum could run into trouble–Russell calls them "hot areas"–include a recent strike, scandal or controversial firing; school closings, rezoning or consolidation; reassessment of property; polarization of communities along racial, ethnic or socioeconomic class lines;

Continued from page 21.

could benefit from professional help. "The boards of education and administrators are so overwhelmed with other responsibilities, and they aren't trained in this sort of thing."

A consultant also can lend moral support and a fresh outlook. "An outside perspective sometimes can give the added oomph to get people over the edge," Russell says. "Sometimes, it's just looking at something from a different point of view, or coming in from a different angle than the community has."

Your school district might consider hiring a consultant if there are issues or controversies in the community that could sidetrack a campaign, if you've lost a previous referendum, or if board members and administrators are unfamiliar with the intricacies of referendum campaigns.

And how much is all this going to cost? Most consultants offer a variety of options ranging from a flat fee to an hourly charge, depending on the type of services they will be offering. "We meet with the client first," Russell says. "Then we go back to our office and we design generally three to four different proposals." Steve Larson of Illinois School Consulting Service says, "Whenever we work on a project, the school board will approve a contract based on what we're going to do."

Your school board may wish to hold a preliminary meeting with consultants you are considering, discuss your needs, find out the consultant's previous experience with referendums, and ask for an estimate. If cost is a major consideration, you may want to establish a maximum fee.

Excellent Public Relations Defined, continued from page 22

• Have a clearly organized policy and plan.

The school board has to say it wants a public relations program and will support it financially. The program must be ongoing, with a regular flow of information rather than a crisis-to-crisis approach, and staff responsibilities and procedures should be spelled out.

• Pay attention to internal communications.

Everyone on your staff is involved in public relations–teachers and bus drivers as well as administrators–whether or not you or they realize it. Include your staff in public relations training or workshops and keep them up-to-date on what's going on in your schools, whether through staff meetings, newsletters, or reports on school board meetings. A well-trained and informed staff responds better to parents and the rest of the public.

• Develop communication with parents.

Don't just rely on report cards and notes sent home with parents. Have an open-door visitation policy, and make sure parents understand they can come to the school at any time. Also take advantage of parent workshops, homework hotlines, computer bulletin boards, notes tucked into homework assignments, coffee with the principal, student performances, volunteer appreciation days, award ceremonies and any other opportunities to get parents interested and involved.

• Develop communication with the larger community.

Find ways for senior citizens, business, private schools versus public schools; a perceived poor economy; a credibility problem with the school administration or board; and a hostile press.

Typical opponents may include local taxpayer association, private school supporters, consolidation opponents, and large landowners or property owners. Frustrated special interest groups can also spell trouble. "If you have citizens groups that are anti-curriculum or you've got a group rubbed wrong, this is a group that is just waiting to vote no," says Russell. "They're just waiting to organize even further and to send a campaign straight down the river."

The existence of side issues or opposition doesn't mean you shouldn't put a referendum on the ballot. But you may need to take some extra steps. "You have to be upfront and straightforward with people, make sure they feel like they're getting straight information," Larson says. More important, once you have identified your "hot areas," you are in a better position to plan how you will neutralize these forces and you are less likely to be taken by surprise.

Question 8: Who will do the work?

Get as much community involvement as you can in the initial stages of developing the plan, suggests Henry. "Many districts establish community task forces to study building needs, review already existing reports and make recommendations to the board concerning the building program. Often these people then become powerful voices for the referendum."

A community-based steering committee should oversee the actual campaign. "You have to get the citizens involved," Seiple says. "And they have to get it out to the public." Henry advises that you select the chair and members of the steering committee carefully. "Choose people who are respected and have credibility in the com-

munity. Give consideration and representation to all demographic groups."

Consultants suggest creating a time line for your campaign. Include everything you or your volunteers need to do–no matter how large or how small the task–and who is going to do it. Do you plan to do a telephone survey or a door-to-door canvas? What promotional and informational items will be used? Who will develop them? Will you hold a press day? When? Do you plan an organized letters-to-the-editor campaign? Will you invite elected officials on a tour of the schools? Where and when will your volunteers register voters?

You'll want to make sure your volunteers are armed with slides, fact sheets, brochures and other materials they'll need to present your case to voters. No matter how big or small a role they play, volunteers should be able to answer common questions. What are the school's needs? How exactly is the money going to be spent? What will happen if the referendum fails to pass?

A referendum campaign is a lot of hard work, win or lose. While no surefire book for success exists, good advance planning and communication can go a long way toward improving your odds.

Debi S. Edmund is a free-lance writer based in Springfield. Contact her via the Illinois School Boards Assn., 430 E. Vine St., Springfield, Il 62703. 630-629-3776. This article is reprinted from the association's magazine, the *ISB Journal*.

ness and civic and political leaders, and people who don't have school-age children to get familiar with your schools. If your community is racially or culturally mixed, or in other ways diverse, make sure your public relations program is targeting all groups.

• Cultivate a working relationship with the news media.

Meet the reporters who cover education in your community, learn what they want from you and find ways to cooperate with them. Be as honest as possible when there is a crisis, issue timely news releases that keep the press up to date about positive things that are happening in your school, and have a regular contact person available when a reporter has questions.

• Find ways to get public feedback.

Good communication with the public should be a two-way process. Whether through key communicators, surveys, focus groups or suggestion boxes, find ways to get regular feedback from parents and others in the community on their needs and their feelings about your schools.

• Use a variety of communication methods.

Don't rely totally on the press or on an occasional newsletter to keep your schools in front of the public. Take advantage of building tours, open houses, breakfasts with civic leaders, speakers bureaus, citizen advisory committees, school-business partnerships, senior citizen mentors, community programs that use student volunteers, and other creative ways to increase public awareness of your schools and your students.

• Include provisions for regular evaluation and accountability.

Periodically evaluate your public relations program to see if it is efficient and cost effective. If it is not–or even if it is–don't be afraid to try something new and different now and then.

One School's Approach

Communication Challenges at Milton Hershey School, Pennsylvania

Relating to internal and external audiences has priority at this school for needy children

An interview by Editor Albert E. Holliday

Chocolate magnate and philanthropist Milton S. Hershey and his wife, Catherine, had no children of their own. They decided to devote a major portion of their fortune, derived from the successful business Milton had established in the late 1800s in southcentral Pennsylvania, to young people. In 1909, they established the Hershey Industrial School to "provide a sound education and a wholesome, secure agrarian environment for orphaned boys." The mission of the residential school, now named Milton Hershey School, serves about 1,100 needy boys and girls through elementary, middle and high schools.

Linda L. Miller has been director of communications through several administrations at the school, and we asked her a dozen questions to learn how the board and staff handles internal and external relations, responsibilities at the well-endowed institution. Her responses follow.

1. Does anyone ever ask why Milton Hershey School needs a communications program, in light of its endowment?

Milton Hershey School has an endowment today equal to that of Stanford University. The school needs a communication program for many of the same reasons that other schools, colleges, and universities need such programs. We have internal and external constituencies we need to keep informed, such as employees, students, parents/sponsors, alumni, retired employees, and the catch-all category "friends of the school," which includes business, civic, and interested community leaders.

2. What are the major objectives of your program?

We strive for communication internally and externally that informs, involves, builds knowledge, and spreads the word about Milton Hershey School. We strive to create public awareness and understanding within local communities and beyond.

MHS's auto technology program was granted certification by the national auto tech education foundation. Graduates of this certified program are given preference in being hired.

3. Where are you placed on the organization's chart? What is your role in this?

As director of communications, I report to the Senior Vice President of the Programs Division. This individual reports to the President. I write and implement the communications policies for the organization. I serve on the organizations' Policy Committee as co-chair.

4. In what ways do you emphasize and conduct internal communication, between the board and staff, between staff members, between the administration and students?

Milton Hershey School has been in a state of considerable change for the last five years. We have a number of initiatives occurring simultaneously. We are in the process of re-engineering the overall program for the students to individualize nurture and education for them. We are constructing five new, additional buildings on our campus beginning in 1998 through the Year 2001 to create a "town center" within our campus community. And, to top it off, we are in a year-long study to explore ways that we can serve more financially and socially needy children.

We strive to tell our employees first when a news announcement is developed for release. We use our weekly employee newsletter to carry the message most times, and depending on the announcement we hold employee briefings in various locations on our campus. We rely on the teachers and houseparents to explain news announcements to students, as needed. Our president maintains a direct communication link with the Board of Managers, as this governing body is called for our school. An area we are working on is improved communication between administration, staff, and students—a typical challenge for virtually every institution of education,

As a residential school, promoting a family atmosphere for children away from their own homes is a priority.

whether it's a college, university, or K-12 school.

5. Do you have an outreach program to locate/notify prospective students? How is this aspect handled, and what is your role in it?

Yes, we have a marketing plan and a marketing team, consisting of administrative representatives from Communications, the school's Community Services unit (which includes Admissions, Family Relations, Social Work), and Research & Evaluation, facilitated by the Executive Director of Systems, Planning and Development. Within the Communications Office, I've assigned the number two person as leader of the marketing communications team. This trio is in charge of routine and marketing-related publicity, Speakers Bureau, volunteer training for media relations in the field, and implementing with Admissions the various objectives spelled out in the marketing plan, which includes proactive queries and outreach to a variety of education and child care-related institutional publications, news media, etc. The Admissions marketing representatives are the primary contact persons in dealing with prospective families. Many of the prospective families hear about MHS via word of mouth.

6. Community relations—how do you handle relations with citizens and governmental officials in the Greater Hershey area?

Our approach is a "come see for yourself" one. We encourage the general public

These three MHS graduates of 1997 attended a networking night at the homebase of Penn State University where they are now enrolled. With 7,000 alumni, the MHS staff attempts to arrange for networking of recent graduates with alumni at colleges and in other locations across the nation.

to attend concerts and other special events on our campus. We continuously place news articles via press releases in the local newspapers and other media to highlight the achievements of our students and staff. We held a public open house at our new Horticultural Center, and offered shuttle tours with stops at several of our key buildings. The Horticultural Center open house drew close to 500 community residents. We also involve opinion makers and community leaders from time to time in briefing sessions. The focus of these deal with change, such as when we held 25 briefing sessions internally and externally to announce our centralized campus concept and gain feedback. We are in process now of holding a series of sessions related to the school's strategic options for its future.

7. Do you have roles in maintaining contact/communication with MHS graduates? Do you seek to involve and/or inspire as well as inform them?

MHS has some 7,000 graduates. We award high school diplomas to about 100 each year. The Office of Communications works closely with the school's Alumni Programs Office, which acts as a liaison with the school's independent alumni association. Our office provides twice per year the school's magazine, *Legacy*, to all alumni of known address (about 5,000). A special section is dedicated to alumni news and and class notes. We also send all alumni a copy of the school's annual report, which is in its second year of publication. The Alumni Programs Office staff seeks to involve alumni in activities that will benefit current students, such as a mentorship, internship, or penpalship. More and more alumni are getting involved and it has been positive for the students and the overall relationship.

8. How have you handled crisis situations with local, state, and national media? Do you speak for the organization, or is this handled by another office?

Like any school that has a PR or communications office, calls from reporters either come to us directly or are forwarded to us by another staff member. Reporters learn quickly that the Office of Communications is the central point for obtaining quotes and statements. We collect pertinent information for response to reporters, and work with senior officers of the school in analyzing the situation for a response. We provide

The Hershey school approach to student achievement is based on *standards* of knowledge expected of students, the kinds of *instruction* necessary for students to achieve them, and *assessment* to measure the achievements.

liaison to arrange an interview with a vice president or the president, if appropriate. Sometimes the school's position statement is issued either by the director of communications or the communications representative who has media relations responsibilities. Each situation is different, and therefore we work through the situation using sound PR principles.

9. To what degree do you contract service, such as preparation of publications and reports?

We use two contract writers to help us collect information and write articles for the school's signature publications—the magazine and annual report—as well as for the bi-monthly expanded employee newsletter. We use a design firm for color work.

10. What is the staff size of your office?

Five full-time and two-part time, plus one part-time position that averages about 8 hours per week for clerical support. The communications team includes the director, the communication representative, who is leader of the marketing communications team that includes one full-time assistant for design and publicity, and one part-time writer, a part-time publications specialist who handles the employee newsletter and a myriad of print projects including the signature publications, a communications assistant who functions as office manager to keep production flowing and systems operating, and a senior administrative secretary who produces a 16-page student/houseparent bulletin and keeps the school's Web site and its new Intranet up-to-date.

MHS alumnus William Abbott, 1956, poses with Mikhail Gorbachev. Abbott works in international finance for the Gorbachev Foundation, based at Northeastern University.

11. How are you and your staff members evaluated, and by whom?

The school is in its second year of a Performance Management System called "Maximizing Your Performance." The administrative employees of all levels participate in this system. At the start of a new 12-month cycle, each employee sets objectives and behavioral dimensions that are designed to help him/her effectively and appropriately reach the objectives. The employee's objectives link directly to the school's strategic plan and the organizational units' and departments' annual action plans. The employee's supervisor meets with the employee to agree on the objectives and dimensions. Check-point meetings are held at least twice during the cycle, and an annual review is conducted. The employee has the responsibility for collecting data in support of his/her own objectives. He/she reviews all of the data with his/her supervisor during the check-point meetings and annual review. The supervisor provides a rating for each of the objectives and dimensions, and then provides an overall rating at year-end. An employee *meets*, *exceeds*, or *doesn't meet* each objective or dimension.

12. What are your major challenges in the near future?

Keeping pace with the re-engineering that is occurring inside the organization is just one aspect that we in the Office of Communications need to do in order to keep employees informed and to guide the overall communication process as managers implement changes.

Increased attention will have to be dedicated to training of managers and other staff members in communications policies, media relations, crisis communication, etc. I just finished a Crisis Communication Manual into which will be merged additional trauma response principles and procedures for reference of the school's administrators and management level staff. Training will begin in late summer, at the start of the new school year. Given the alarming national trend of guns in the hands of youth, schools across America have much at stake—i.e., the lives of students and staff, plus the public relations crisis potential at the national level.

Another challenge is assisting in the internal and external communications related to whatever strategic options the school's Board of Managers decides to undertake in order for MHS to serve more needy children in Hershey and possibly elsewhere. We are engaged in an 11-month exhaustive study of possible options.

We are exploring such new avenues as

- creating an institute that would convene agencies involved in children and family issues;
- increasing outreach to other schools and child care organizations;
- transplanting parts of the MHS program elsewhere to existing or new schools;
- trying to influence public opinion and policy about the plight of needy children; or
- enlarging the population at the MHS campus.

The Office of Communications might be called upon to dramatically step up its public relations outreach efforts when the study concludes at the end of 1998.

In the meantime, as director, I am engaged in developing the communication plan and implementing it with the Steering Committee and senior officers and president who are guiding the process.

Students have full schedules of learning–enrichment activities including academics, the arts, sports, vocational training, household responsibilities, internships, and social events, among others.

Photographs supplied by MHS Office of Communication.

In May of 1998, Linda's office issued Vol. 8, No. 1 of the school's ***Legacy*** magazine, published for parents, alumni, students and friends. This issue features a unique game-board type illustration to depict the school's varied programs and activities. For a copy, contact her at Milton Hershey School, P.O. Box 830, Hershey PA 17033 or telephone 717-520-2205.

Too often we give children answers to remember rather than problems to solve.

Roger Lewin

Where Does Allegiance Lie?

A Principal Faces a Test of his Professional Ethics

by David M. Denny

When Frank Earnest came to Crest High School, he was an ambitious, 38-year-old administrator, eager to assume the helm of a high school. Lacking the patience to wait for a promotion and frustrated by the stifling bureaucracy and impersonal treatment of both students and staff in the large district, Frank had yearned for greener pastures.

So, he accepted with glee the principalship of a 120-student high school in the sprawling, rural ranching community of Crest, about 70 miles from the nearest metropolitan city. A nexus of the Missouri, Pacific and Santa Fe railroads, Crest was once a dynamic center of commerce and industry in the western part of the United States.

The decline of the railroads dealt a critical blow to the economy and population of Crest. Most of its denizens left Crest for more promising opportunities in other towns. Only a few families, self-proclaimed as "The Diehard Dozen," stayed behind, acquired the cheap land, and pursued ranching.

Superintendent Ian Master belonged to one of these families and was related to most of the others. Under his management, Crest Independent School District had become a model of fiscal responsibility. Frank soon discovered that the superintendent, while an excellent delegator, kept a hand in every decision made in the district.

The school district employed Master's wife, daughter and niece as teachers in the high school. This informal support/information system helped to keep Superintendent Master well informed on the activities of those in Crest High School. While not pleased with his lack of autonomy, Frank quickly learned his role and developed some satisfaction with the academic and athletic prowess of Crest High School students.

The principal's trouble began when state education agency officials announced that the Crest district would be audited. On hearing this, Frank began a self-audit to uncover any problems before the state's team reached his school. Most of the concerns he uncovered were easily addressed and remedied. However, Frank did discover one troubling personnel problem during an examination of staff records. According to recent appraisals of Sue Means, the superintendent's niece, she was a competent health teacher. Frank found, however, that she was not certified to teach health. Her only certification area was physical education. With much trepidation, Frank decided to call Sue in to talk about the discrepancy.

Sue was an excellent basketball coach. Her teams had set a record of winning 57 consecutive district games, and the district championship eight years in a row. The

Before the state education agency team reached his school, Principal Earnest began his own audit to uncover any problems and resolve them.

girls' teams played before standing-room-only crowds both at home and on the road. The booster club built a billboard on the outskirts of town recognizing the multiple years of district crowns and the two state championships Sue's team had recently won.

Despite her coercive and demanding coaching style–during many lopsided victories, she continued to keep her starters pressing the opponent until the end of the game–she was respected and loved by the hometown fans.

Frank began his questioning with these factors in mind. "Sue, I noticed in your personnel file that you are not certified as a health teacher, yet you've been teaching health at both the high school and the junior high for several years. Is there a plan in place to pick up the certification?" he asked.

Sue's smile disappeared from her face as she straightened in her seat. Unaccustomed to being challenged on any point, her voice became loud and angry as she replied. "I don't believe this. I'm preparing my team to begin district play and don't have time for this. This isn't my problem, it's yours. If you have any problems with my schedule, you should see Ian."

To clarify his position, Frank quietly replied, "With the state education agency people coming, we must have all our ducks in a row. Obviously, I cannot allow an uncertified teacher to teach without a university deficiency plan. Perhaps, we could..."

"You need to get one thing straight about me," Sue interrupted, cutting him off in mid-sentence. "I'll be here long after you're a distant memory. I graduated here, I've coached two undefeated championship teams and I've been a part of this school for 26 years." She rose and headed toward the door as she concluded, "If you think you have any real say-so over me or my job, dream on!" The sound of the door slamming behind her echoed throughout the halls of Crest High School.

Frank knew that he had to discuss this situation with the superintendent. As he approached that office, he realized that Sue had preceded him. Her raised voice could easily be heard through the closed office door.

"I don't have time for this, Ian!" she angrily shouted. "You told me that I wouldn't have to worry about certification when you asked me to teach these classes. I want you to keep that principal off my back. I have to focus on the games we'll be playing!"

Hearing this with some dismay, Frank quickly retreated to his office. He reviewed his conversation with Sue Means, wondering how it could have led to the present situation. In addition, the revelation that his boss was an active participant in this illegal-

ity stunned him. Several hours later, when he received the expected summons to the superintendent's office, he was still unsure of what he was going to say during the meeting.

"Why, in heavens name, did you upset Sue like that!" exclaimed Ian. "She has such solid support from the community," he continued, "it would be a mistake to cause her trouble in the future."

"I didn't mean to upset her," Frank answered. "My only concern is that she is teaching a class for which she has no certification. I thought we should solve this problem before the state audit begins. This arrangement has apparently been going on for several years, but she will need to obtain a deficiency plan from a college to make her teaching assignment legal."

"I wasn't aware that Sue wasn't certified, but I do know that she has been teaching health successfully for more than seven years," Ian replied. "She has her first district game scheduled in one week and she doesn't have the time to run to a university to solve **your** problem. You're going to have to be creative and find a solution."

After a few seconds pause, the superintendent continued. "The football coach, Tim Mead, is certified in health. During the agency visit, we could have Tim cover Sue's classes. You'll need to create a new master schedule and replace the old schedules in each teacher's handbook. Tell Coach Mead he should meet with Sue to plan his takeover of her class. Of course, they'll all return to the old schedule when the state team is gone."

Astonished by the proposed solution and unable to respond adequately to it, Frank managed to mutter a few words of departure and went to his office to think. He couldn't believe that the superintendent had just lied to him and asked him to falsify documents and involve others in deceiving a state education agency. As a man of integrity, he did not want to be part of this chicanery. Beyond that, even if he could fool the agency, every teacher on the staff would become aware of the change in the schedule when he asked them for their handbooks. Would his credibility with the staff be affected? Moreover, how would the students react to the change?

If he did do it, what would happen if the subterfuge was discovered? He felt certain that the superintendent would disavow any knowledge of the incident and leave him to face state agency officials alone. Would he lose his credentials? Did he really have a choice? His short tenure as Crest High School's principal would probably end if he did not comply with the superintendent's request, and the negative recommendation that would result would make finding another principalship difficult.

His mind bounced between the two avenues of action. What should he do?

"You need to get one thing straight about me–I'll be here long after you're a distant memory..."

Sue Means, girls basketball coach and niece of the superintendent.

Principal Earnest couldn't believe that the superintendent had just lied to him.

Should he do as his superintendent had demanded, or should he remain steadfast to his professional ethics?

David M. Denny III is an assistant principal at Carey Creek High School with the Conroe Independent School District in Conroe, Texas.

Case Study Response:

Two Wrong Decisions Never Make a Situation Right

by Stephen L. Stark

As principal, Frank Earnest is bound by a professional code of ethics to resolve this issue of teacher certification in compliance with state law. If doing so puts his administrative position in jeopardy, so be it. To respond differently would violate professional principles and place his administrative credentials at risk.

Two possible solutions are available. First, Frank could remove Sue as teacher of the health class and replace her with a certified teacher. Sue could be placed in a teaching position that she is certified to teach. Then the audit team could be informed that the problem had been discovered and resolved.

The second solution would involve the school district in filing for an emergency certificate that would let Sue continue teaching the health class. This action would resolve the issue for the rest of the current school year and give the district time to find a replacement for the following year. Sue could be reassigned to a teaching position that she was certified to teach for the next year.

Regardless of what strategy is selected to resolve the issue, Frank still has a larger problem facing him. After this experience, he should consider leaving the district to find a new position where his professional integrity would not be compromised. Once a principal encounters a situation where the superintendent displays leadership contrary to ethical professional principles, the principal may be tempted to risk similar behavior to survive.

Stephen L. Stark is a professor of educational administration at Texas A&M University.

Case Studies are edited by Philip T. West, professor emeritus, Texas A&M University, Harrington Education Center, College Station, TX 77843.

This could be such a beautiful world if we could all care just a little more

Rosalind Welcher

If you want to get across an idea, wrap it around a person.

Ralph Bunche

Book Reviews

By Arthur W. Steller

Books for review and requests to serve as guest book reviewer may be sent to editor Arthur W. Steller, Superintendent of Kingston City Schools, 61 Crown St., Kingston, NY 12401.

Educational Marketing: A Business Approach to School-Community Relations By John Holcomb. University Press of America, Inc., 4720 Boston Way, Lanham, MD 20706. 1993.

Readers of this book won't find specific techniques for developing or implementing a marketing plan. They will read a rationale for marketing and an experienced educator's opinions about how to better the public's image of the public schools.

According to the author, "Education is a product, as well as a service. It can be measured, evaluated, weighted, realigned, packaged...and marketed...to effectively market education, we must be certain that we are marketing a *quality* product.

School systems can use not just marketing, the author states, but other business methodology as well to improve. His application of marketing includes limiting school operations to those things we can do well or that fall within our primary mission. Other activities should be outsourced or jettisoned.

He makes the point that when schools were comparatively cheap, there was no need to market them. As the cost of education rose, more critics were attracted and, hence, the need for marketing.

The following three reviews are of books published in 1997 by Corwin Press, Inc., 2455 Teller Rd., Thousand Oaks, CA 91320.

Everybody's House–the Schoolhouse: Best Techniques for Connecting Home, School and Community. By Carolyn Warner with Marilyn Curry. 153pp.

Useful ideas for building bridges between the school, home and community can be found in many publications. Much of this volume was contributed by principals named as state principals of the year or by those principals of Blue Ribbon Schools (the national recognition program). These are

some of the best public relation activities used by some excellent schools.

Involving parents and families is important, as the author states: "I have never met a parent who wanted her or his child to fail. However, some parents just don't know how to help their child succeed. Schools do know how to help a child succeed, and they know that children succeed best when the home and school are partners."

Readers will learn how to create at-home and in-school involvement programs that provide purposeful opportunities for parents, include parents in decision-making, engage community stakeholders, forge business/school partnerships, reach diverse families, and to a certain extent, "unreachable" parents.

The recognition that some parents create problems for school personnel, not to mention their own children, bathes this book in the light of realism. This book will appeal to readers who want ideas that have been tried and found to work.

School, Family and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action. By Joyce Epstein, et al. 229pp.

Joyce Epstein, the main author, is a name synonymous with parental involvement in schools. While she has published numerous articles, she is also well known for her involvement with schools in helping to build partnerships. This book is crammed full of activities and programs that she has field-tested for more than 12 years.

Readers who desire to foster meaningful partnerships will find the strategies, checklists, overheads, flyers, and so forth sufficiently detailed to do the job. This step-by-step approach requires discipline for an extended period of time. However, the particulars could be cut back and implementors could supply their own creativity.

This handbook is based upon what will work in different communities. There is planned flexibility within the answers that participants give throughout the various discussions and surveys. The essence of this approach is that people working together should tailor these programs to address their own unique needs. Sharing ideas that work and learning from others is vigorously encouraged.

Although most adults connected to schools can benefit from this handbook, most likely only professional volunteer/parental coordinators or public relations directors will have the background and tenacity to complete this program.

Gaining Support for Your School–Strategies for Community Involvement. By Donna Schmitt and Jaclynn Tracy. 56pp.

"...when individuals feel that they are not getting anything worthwhile for their school money, negativism and lack of support results. Only through the development of mutual ownership of schools...can we reverse this type of thinking."

This philosophy permeates the writing of the authors. Chapter titles such as "The Need for Change: Involving Community and Schools" and "The Community's New Role in K-12 Education" convey the sense of relationships and ownership of schools.

Readers who need a rationale for building a partnership with the community will discover that this small packet contains appropriate research and policy provisions. In some cases, this quick-to-read document may be passed on to others who need more of a foundation. But if you want or need specific activities to realize the intent of this booklet, you will have to look elsewhere.

One of the most intriguing chapters is "Behind Closed Doors at the Office," which discusses some of the dirty tricks and dark side of organizational life. To

deal with these, the authors advise that you watch your back, don't become involved in situations that may boomerang, and say little that is negative–even if it is true, among other cautions.

You've Only Got Three Seconds: How to Make the Right Impression in Your Business and Social Life. By Camille Lavington. Doubleday, 1540 Broadway, New York, NY 10036. 1997. 218pp.

Executive enhancement is the term this consultant-turned-author uses to convey what she does to help executives create productive images for themselves. Her approach is more than public relations; at times, it becomes a personal makeover while touching on organizational politics and awareness.

She begins with the following alert:

> **Enter a room, and it's already happened. Three seconds and you've been evaluated by everyone who saw you, even if all they did was give a glance. They appraised your clothing and hairstyle. They noticed the way you carry yourself. They assessed your grooming and accessories. They observed as you greeted someone near the door. Three seconds have passed, and you've already made an indelible impression.**

The heart of these personal marketing strategies is the author's "Ten Secrets of Power," such as "Self-Awareness of Your Talents and Abilities," "Stage a Performance and Package Your Presentation," "Engage in Unabashed Self-Promotion," and "Use Your Instincts and Street Smarts."

Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty: The Only Networking Book you'll Ever Need. By Harvey Mackey. Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1540 Broadway, New York, NY 10036. 1997. 311pp.

Harvey Mackey is the acknowledged king of networking. His first book, *Swim with the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive*, was a best seller. He has written other books, is a nationally syndicated columnist, has appeared on national talk shows, and produced audio, video and software programs about networking. As president of an envelope and stationary company, networking is how he sells his wares.

The field of school public relations is no stranger to networking. However, there is much to learn from the master about how to network with a vengeance that exceeds what most educators experience.

Some reasons for a network are:

- A network replaces the weakness of the individual with the strength of the group.
- Mirror, mirror on the wall.
- Know thine enemy through thine network.
- My network can help you expand your network.
- A network can enrich your life anywhere in the world.
- A network can provide you with new experiences and knowledge.
- Networking can help you help others.
- Job security? Don't rely on the corporation. Rely on your network.

Harvey Mackey's multiple points of advice are epitomized with his belief that with a strong network, help for any situation is only a phone call (or two or three) away! Reading this book and implementing these strategies and techniques could enable you to advance school public relations to a new level.

Photo Credits

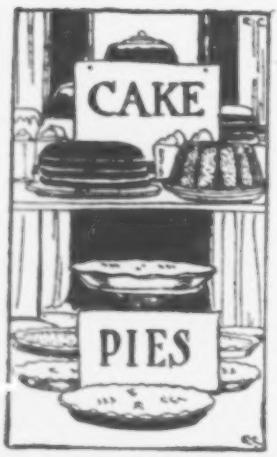
Addresses for photographers whose work we are using in Vol. 19, No. 2:

Michael Siluk lives and works from New Brighton, Minnesota, (1000 3rd St., NW, 55112). His phone number is 612-636-5843, and he is available for assignments.

Geri Kody can be contacted at Clark County Schools, 4212 Eucalyptus Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89121; 702-799-5442.

Dale D. Gehman can be contacted at 1265 Risser Mill Rd., Mount Joy, PA 17552; 717-653-6792.

The above photographers can supply a variety of photos for review and publication on a one-time basis for fees to be arranged depending on the nature of the use.



1998 *Journal* Editorial Review Board

Larry Ascough, Elgin, IL,U-46 Schools

Don Bagin, Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ

B. Dean Bowles, University of Wisconsin

Carolyn H. Chapman, Univ. of Nevada, Reno

Marsha Chappelow, Blue Valley Schools, Overland Park, KS

Judith Cochran, Wright State University, OH

Floyd Coppedge, State Secretary of Education, OK

Larry E. Decker, Florida Atlantic University

Don Gallagher, professor emeritus, Rowan University

Mel Heller, Loyola University, Chicago

Anne L. Jefferson, University of Ottawa

J. William Jones, PECO Energy Co., PA

Theodore J. Kowalski, Ball State University, IN

William Allan Kritsonis, Lake Charles, LA

Tami James Moore, University of Nebraska, Kearney

Frances Powell, Duval County Schools, FL

Donna M. Schmitt, Eastern Michigan University

I. Sue Shepard, Southeast Missouri State University

Harriett Stonehill, Megaskills Education Center, Washington, DC

Arthur W. Stellar, Kingston Schools, NY

Philip T. West, Texas A&M

Charles L. Willis, Dayton, OH

Brenda Williams, College of William and Mary, VA

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Guidelines for Submission

Relations—The Journal of Educational Relations

A refereed journal--scholarly articles by academic/higher education authorities are refereed by an international editorial review board. The *Journal* also accepts articles by practitioners and administrators in basic (K-12) education and journalists at large.

Scope

Articles are sought on topics such as internal communication and climate, employee motivation, parent involvement, partnerships, working with the news media, community participation, audits, surveying and polls, community service programs for students, communication training, advisory committees, volunteers, writing and speaking, publications, alumni associations, foundations, mentoring, photography, and related topics.

The overall goal of the *Journal* is to support efforts to enhance/foster student achievement and staff productivity, and to provide information to build public knowledge of the value and potential benefits of a sound basic education of our youth. We advocate the concept that the school public relations function must be based on fact and reality as compared to ideals and goals of educators and the community at large.

Style

Scholarly articles can be prepared following style guidelines of the publication manual of the American Psychological Association, **with these exceptions:**

1. **Do not** place last names of authors being cited and the year *within* the text. Number citations sequentially in the text; provide usual citations in **references following the article**.

2. Before the start of the article, include a summary of the scope and major findings of the article in one paragraph.

We encourage you to include photographs, drawings, and tables as appropriate

Submissions

- Submit four copies of a manuscript with a letter from the author(s).
- Articles should be 1,000 to 3,500 words in length.
- If produced on a computer, supply a disk, clearly labeled, in ASCII format, IBM format only, with the text copies.
- Include an abstract of the article and a two-three sentence credit for each author on a separate sheet.
- Advise if the article has been published or is being considered elsewhere.
- Queries for articles on specific topics are welcomed.
- SASE. Include a #10 self-addressed, stamped envelope for acknowledgement of receipt of your article. Include a 9" x 12" similar envelope for reply to submissions or queries.
- Response to an article or a query is usually conveyed to an author within 60 days.

Address manuscripts and correspondence to Albert E. Holliday, Editor and Publisher, Journal of Educational Relations, 1830 Walnut St., Camp Hill, PA 17011. 717-761-6620.

Previous *Journals* are available in microfilm from University Microfilm Int., 300 Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Refer to *Journal of Educational Communications* (1975-83), *Journal of Educational Public Relations* (1984-95) and *Journal of Educational Relations* (1995-).

Albert E. Holliday, Editor-Publisher
Journal of Educational Relations
P.O. Box 657
Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #152
Camp Hill, PA 17011

Great Words to Live By

Never, ever mess with the Ladies' Auxiliary.
–Andy, on the Andy Griffith Show.

Some of us should be thankful we don't get what we deserve.
–Ann Landers

Any speaker who begins by saying "This shouldn't take long," will speak twice as long as the time allocated.
–Kyle Rollins

When a professor says, "That's a good question," the professor doesn't have a good answer.
–Walter Kennevan

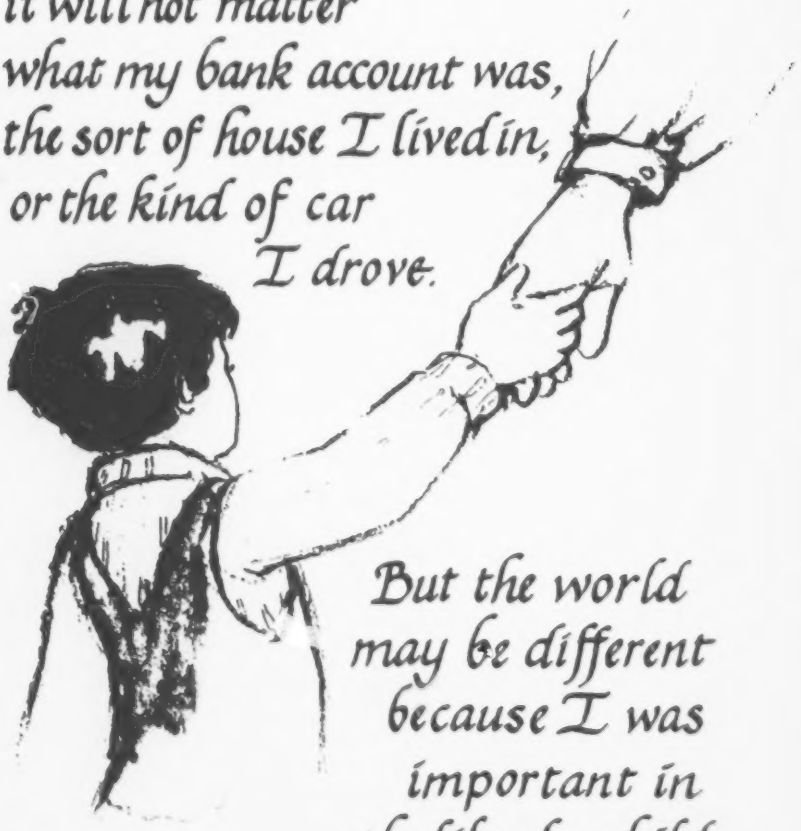
If there's no alternative, there's no problem.
–James Burnham

Inertia his its own momentum.
–Alice Breider

Whenever someone tells you, "It's nothing personal," that person is about to cause you great pain.
–Bill Clinton, quoted by Meridith L. Oakley

The Journal of Educational

RELATIONS



ED 027274

Promoting student achievement through positive school-home-community relationships Vol. 19 No. 3, 3rd Quarter 1998

Mentors and More to Copy and Share with Staff and Board†

A program every district needs

In the 1960s and '70s, we were told by consultants to find ways to bring community people—especially critics and complainers— into schools where they could "see" their tax dollars at work.

One of the most important developments of the 1990s has been the use of adult mentors for students. Susan Weinberger describes her program, which has proven to be a national model, in this issue. Every school board, regardless of size or location, ought to consider starting such a program in which citizens go into schools and help youngsters.

Who is to speak out in your district?

In a different vein, several articles relate to the national "debate" about the quality and operation of public education. The exhortations by Troy, Oravitz and Gilman should give any supporter of our schools plenty of material to rebut negative critics. I mean critics with incorrect information or who want to divert public money for private use, as opposed to those who offer constructive criticism.

Unfortunately, too many superintendents and educators think that communicating the successes of schools and countering improper charges about public education is someone else's job. Most of the 14,500 school districts in the U.S. do not have a communication specialist or school-community relations director. All too often, it's only the 20 or 25 percent of those people in a community that have students in school who really know what's going on.

Until school administrators take the advice of Frosty Troy, and others as cited in this *Journal* over the past 23 years, the critics with their own agendas will continue to gain supporters.

Al Holliday

†Subscribers at schools and districts may photocopy articles to share with the staff and board. Be sure to credit the *Journal*, and include the issue date and copyright. For example, a credit line for use with items from this issue would read as follows:

Reproduced from the *Journal of Educational Relations*, Vol. 19, No. 3, copyright 1998.

Subscribers and readers at intermediate units and higher education can contact the publisher at 717-761-6620 for reprint information.

Special request: Photos

We need photos for article illustrations. We prefer black and white, but can use color prints (no slides). We prefer these types of shots: students alone, with a few others, and with an adult (teacher, aide, mentor). We can't use large group photos and photos with people looking at the camera. We prefer active scenes as opposed to students just looking at something. Photos will be credited to the photographers and returned.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Vol. 19, No. 3
3rd Quarter 1998

IFC Editor's Column

4 **The Norwalk Mentor Program.** One student plus one adult leads to value for both. *By Susan G. Weinberger.*

11 **Enhance Your Board's Effectiveness Through Self-Evaluation**—A board needs processes for continued improvement. *By Kathie Rozovicks.*

17 **Why Can't Schools be Operated the Way Businesses Are?** A school official has several reasons. *By Joseph V. Oravitz.*

20 **20 Myths and Facts about Our Education System.** Public Education is the most lied-about, misreported story in America. *By Forrest J. (Frosty) Troy.*

27 **The 3 Rs for Wooing the Public**—Respect, Reassurance, Recognition. *By Dorothy Rich.*

30 **What Schools Are Expected to Do**—And the list is not complete. *By David Alan Gilman.*

33 **Communication Commentary.** Education Relations News.

IBC **Guidelines for Submission.**

BC **Universal Accreditation for NSPRA professionals?**

This issue's cover illustration is part of materials mentors use in the Norwalk program. See page 4.

Subscription Service:
questions, renewals, new orders, change of address,
Call toll-free: 800-537-2624.
Outside U.S. (717) 766-0574
EDITORIAL CALL: (717) 761-6620

RELATIONS-The Journal of Educational Relations—ISSN 0741-3653
Editor-in-chief: Albert E. Holliday
Associate Editor: Joan M. Holliday
Book reviews: Arthur W. Steller
Case studies/Research: Philip T. West

The Journal of Educational Relations is published quarterly by the Educational Communication Center, Box 657, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657. Telephone 717-761-6620.
Copyright 1998.
Subscriptions: Individual rate, $48 per year. Single copy, $15. Library rate, $60 per year. Single copy, $20. Add $4 for subscriptions outside of the United States. Payment in U.S. funds.

Periodicals postage paid at Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Journal of Educational Relations*, P.O. Box 657, Camp Hill PA 17001-0657.

The Norwalk Mentor Program

One Student Plus One Adult Leads to Value for Both

by Susan G. Weinberger

Mentor director Susan Weinberger, left, is joined by Louise Esposito, whose mentee of nine years graduated in 1998, and her husband, Frank Esposito, Mayor of Norwalk and a proponent of mentoring.

Mentoring is a one-on-one program for 800 of our students and more than 800 adults who work with them on a weekly basis.

In every school in every district, there are always at least some students who are unmotivated, who need an extra push, who lack support and encouragement of an adult. These students can and do benefit from a one-on-one relationship with selected community adults.

Mentoring is a program in which caring and compassionate adults are matched with deserving youth, known as mentees, for one-hour, weekly individual sessions during the school day at the child's school. The mentors serve as a friend, coach, positive role model and advocate for their mentees.

We began our program with only 14 mentors and students in 1986, and it now encompasses some 800 mentors and the support of nearly 50 corporations, businesses, and organizations within the community. Our urban school system has 11,000 students, and will have 1,000 of them paired with mentors by the year 2000.

We don't have many doubting Thomas/Bettys any more as program evaluations have shown that, overall, participat-

Mentor comes from the Greek for ***steadfast*** and ***enduring.*** It was the term used by Homer to refer to ***a man who was entrusted with the guidance of a young person.*** Since then, mentor has come to mean ***a wise teacher, guide*** and/or ***friend.***

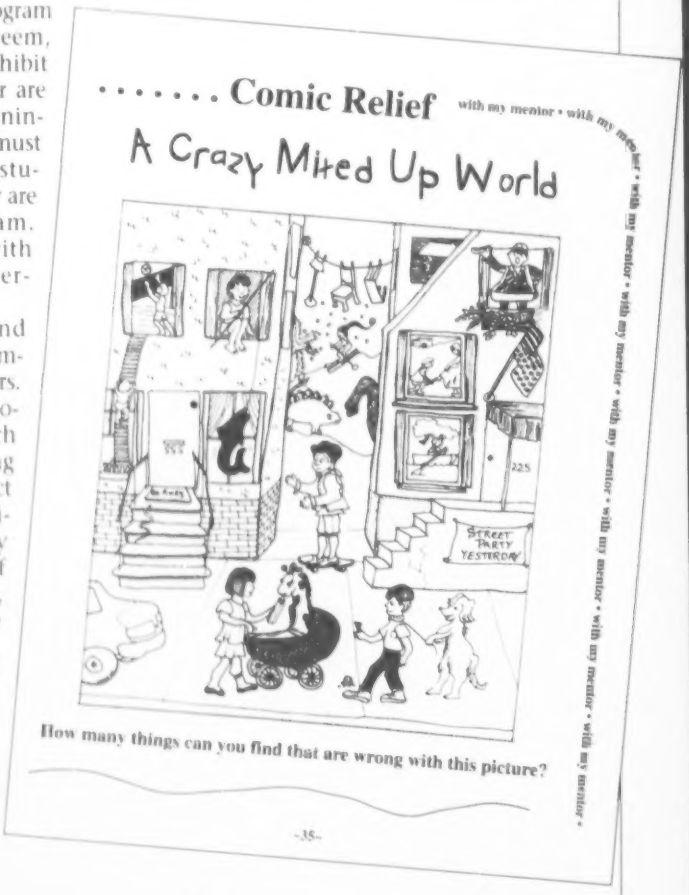
—Carol Chmelynski
New Jersey School Boards Assn.

ing students improve dramatically. They are far less hostile, take more risks, follow directions, get along better with everyone, perform better in school, have improved attendance, and generally stay in school through graduation.

Youth selected for the program are those who lack self-esteem, have negative attitudes, exhibit attendance problems and/or are socially and emotionally uninvolved in school. Parents must give permission for their students to participate, and they are involved in the program. Youngsters are matched with mentors as early as kindergarten.

Mentors are selected and screened from a cadre of community and school volunteers. They receive initial and ongoing training on matters such as problem solving, listening and communicating, conflict resolution and making decisions. They are supported by school-based teams of administrators, teachers, social workers, guidance counselors and nurses. Mentors work with their individual mentees from onset of their relationship through graduation from high school.

Two of the most used reference and workbooks are *Mirror, Mirror,* A *Book About Me and Connections From School to*


Comic Relief
with my mentor • with my mentor • with my mentor • with my mentor • with my mentor • with my mentor • with my mentor • with my mentor • with my mentor •
A Crazy Mixed Up World
225
STREET PARTY YESTERDAY
How many things can you find that are wrong with this picture?
-35-

A page from *Mirror Mirror* workbook

Robert Wagman has been a mentor to Herbert L. Evans for six years. Herbert will graduate from Norwalk's McMahon High School in 1999.

Career—A Journey With My Mentor.† They were written by Kathy Faggalla and Janet Horowitz especially for use in the Norwalk program. They are used as tools for a mentor, student and the student's family to build self-esteem and prepare students to meet responsibilities of being an adult.

Following is my six-step process to establish, maintain and evaluate a school-based mentor program.

†*Mirror* and *Connections* books are useful in any mentor program. For costs for multiple or sample copies, call The Norwalk Mentor Program at 203-854-4011 in Norwalk.

Six Steps of Mentoring

1. Recruitment and Screening

Based on school needs assessments, volunteers are recruited, interviewed and screened. Job performance, personal references, criminal checks and other evidence of character and reliability are required. These screening steps, plus monitoring by principals and others, assures a solid and safe experience for students.

"My mentee was having trouble in his math class — acting up and trying to be the class clown. We talked about why he was behaving this way. As a result, he has calmed down and hasn't been removed from class since."

—A mentor in the Norwalk program

"When I first began, my mentee wouldn't express herself at all. On her birthday, I brought a little cake and was pleased when she said 'thank you.' This year she has opened up and is doing much better."

—A mentor in the Norwalk program

2. Training and Orientation
Mentors attend a training session led by experts. They learn about liability issues, confidentiality, how to instill self-esteem, goal setting and the role of the family in the program. At a school orientation meeting, they hear about a typical day in the life of a student, scheduling procedures, check-in requirements and also meet teachers and support staff who will be working with them. Mentors receive tips, strategies, and activities for their weekly sessions.

3. Matching Mentor to Mentee
A profile is completed stating mentor preferences for meeting times, grade level, gender, and race of mentee. School staff uses a specific set of criteria to recommend students for the program. Students selected are potential dropouts. Special interests of volunteers are matched with those of mentees. Mentors sign a release agreement and parental permission is obtained.

4. Weekly Sessions
Mentors spend a minimum of one hour each week during school time with their mentee. They build self-esteem in elementary school by reading, talking, playing games, walking outside, working out in the gymnasium, practicing musical instruments together, reinforcing values and being there as a friend. In middle and high school, mentors assist with career options, school-to-career transition, interviewing skills, community service, college plans and academic performance. All mentoring takes place during the school day on school grounds, in full view of school officials. This ensures maximum protection for the program.

5. Program Evaluation
Personal growth of students is evaluated by attendance records, anecdotal information from teachers about work habits, academic performance and a pre-post self-esteem inventory. Teachers, mentors, and parents evaluate the program and its impact on the mentees.

6. Year-End Celebrations & Renewal
Communication with teachers and parents is on-going. At year-end mentors attend celebrations at school and system-wide where they are honored and thanked. Summer activities are suggested. Renewal for another year is pledged.

Who Benefits?

Mentors

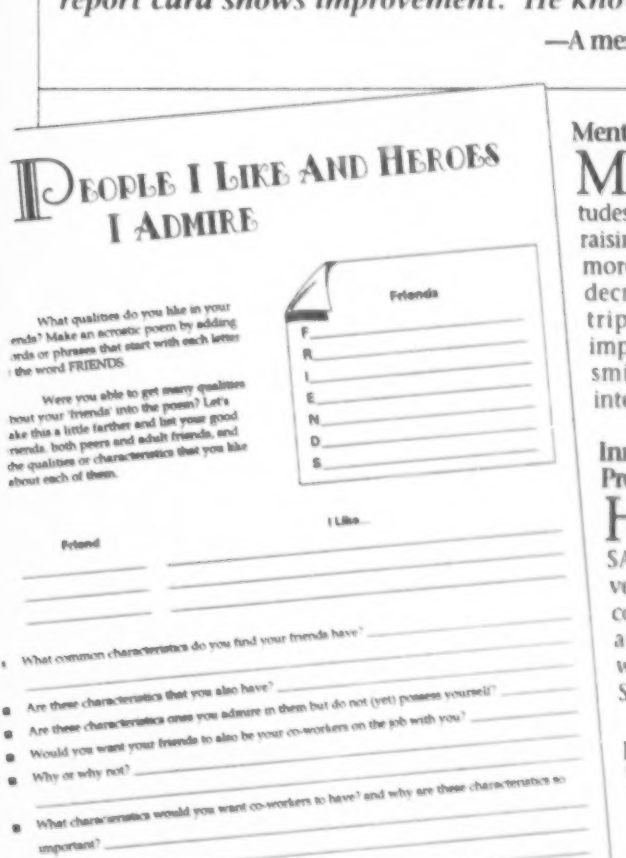
Mentors are: Happier in their workplace; more appreciative of students of same and other races; feeling better about themselves for having had an impact on another's life; improving their understanding of the school system; better able to relate to children; learning more about themselves; helping to prepare the workforce of the twenty-first century.

"My mentee was quiet, reserved and polite although he sometimes craved for attention. At first he only answered my questions but now he is a chatterbox and smiles and laughs.

I visited him at home when he was sick and now know his mother, his brothers and neighbors. We play basketball. That was the best way to get my mentee to talk. We have been to the YMCA, the nature center and the library (with supervision or approval of the staff).

For a month now, he has done all his homework and his report card shows improvement. He knows he can do it!"

—A mentor in the Norwalk program



PEOPLE I LIKE AND HEROES I ADMIRE

What qualities do you like in your ends? Make an acrostic poem by adding rds or phrases that start with each letter the word FRIENDS.

Were you able to get many qualities bout your 'friends' into the poem? Let's ake this a little farther and list your good riends, both peers and adult friends, and the qualities or characteristics that you like about each of them.

Friends

F_____
R_____
I_____
E_____
N_____
D_____
S_____

Friend — I Like...

_____
_____
_____

- What common characteristics do you find your friends have?
- Are these characteristics that you also have?
- Are these characteristics ones you admire in them but do not (yet) possess yourself?
- Would you want your friends to also be your co-workers on the job with you?
- Why or why not?
- What characteristics would you want co-workers to have? and why are these characteristics so important?
- Describe yourself as a friend.
- Describe yourself as a co-worker (or as one you would like to be).

A page from the *Connections* workbook

Mentees

Mentees are: Showing improved attendance, self-esteem, attitudes and increased communication; raising a hand more in class; taking more risks; improving eye contact; decreasing hostility; taking fewer trips to the principal's office; improving academic performance; smiling and happier; improving interactions with peers.

Innovative Components of the Program

High school component includes helping students with SAT preparation, obtaining driver's licenses, career development, community service, filling out job and college applications, and worksite mentoring in the School-to-Career initiative.

Selected mentors work with pregnant teens, young parents, troubled middle school youth,

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

and gifted and talented students.

Two workbooks: Mirror Mirror and Connections From School to Career are used by mentors and mentees during their weekly sessions.

Special Features

Communication
A Mentor Brown Bag Lunch Series and ongoing training ensure constant communication between teachers and mentors. Concerns and questions of mentors are addressed.

Resources
Norwalk's more than 800 committed mentors come from 50 corporations, civic, fraternal and social organizations, alumni associations, retirees, and municipal agencies.

Long Term Approach
The Mentor Program begins as early as kindergarten. The major objective: Mentors stay with their students from kindergarten through grade 12, addressing the second National Education Goal: To increase the high school graduation rate, as well as to develop "ongoing relationships with caring adults."

Family Involvement
A FAMILY (Families and Mentors Involved in Learning for Youth) component includes lunches and evening workshops. Families learn the skills necessary to improve the education of their own children. Initial funding was provided by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

Replication
Initiative began in 1986 and has been replicated in school districts across America including: Danbury and Shelton, CT; Gaston County, N.C.; Las Vegas, NV; Reading, PA; and Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, among many others.

Scholarship
The Norwalk Mentor Scholarship Fund, established through Citizens' Scholarship Foundation of America's Dollars for Scholars Program, provides awards for all mentees who graduate from high school and pursue post-secondary education.

Susan G. Weinberger is originator and director of the Norwalk Mentor Program in Norwalk, CT (125 East Avenue, Suite 320, 06852 - 203-854-4011) that was begun in 1986. This program won the President's Volunteer Action Award in 1993. Dr. Weinberger is a former president of the Assn. of School/Business Partnership Directors. Founded in 1986, the Norwalk Program is the oldest school-based mentor program in the country.

Dr. Weinberger reports that she has "never seen a program that has done more to improve students' self-esteem, attitudes and the desire to stay in school and graduate than mentoring." She is a mentor "franchiser" and consults with boards and administrators who are considering starting such a program.

Dr. Weinberger wrote ***How to Start a Student Mentor Program,*** a PDK Fastback #333 (single copies are $1.25; write for quantity discounts to Phi Delta Kappa, P. O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402-0789).

PHOTO GALLERY: Robert Finken

Too many educators believe that PR is image-building. The approach must be attuned more to mutual understanding and less on persuasion.

David Martinson
Florida International University

Enhance Your Board's Effectiveness

Through Self-Evaluation

A board needs processes for continued improvement

by Kathie Razovicks

Too much is at stake for a school district and its community for its school board to bury its collective head in the sand over questions of how well its members are functioning and whether they are moving the district toward its mission and goals.

We are all familiar with the processes used to evaluate the performance of the superintendent, other administrators, teachers, and students. Is the board modeling the type of work behavior and ethical standards that it wishes the rest of the district to follow? Is the board actively leading the strategic thinking process?

By doing regular self-evaluations, the board not only enhances its own operation, but it also serves as an example for others throughout the school district.

Fundamental building blocks

There are several reasons why your school board should conduct regular self-evaluations, but two stand out.

The first is the new climate surrounding public education that has created an unforgiving environment and demands the highest degree of excellence in governance.

The second reason is that a good evaluation process can help the board improve its performance.

For example, in the case of school choice and charter schools, school board members need to know that they are effectively marketing their school district and ensuring that the mission and vision they helped create for the school district are a central focus of each school.

The evaluation process will help the board by creating a structured opportunity to both look back and to plan ahead. The process of establishing new goals and developing action plans for improvement enables the board to ask itself: What are we doing well? What could we be doing better? How well did we do in achieving our goals? Why didn't we achieve our goals? The answers to these questions provide the springboard to improving next year's performance.

Develop your unique style

Developing an evaluation instrument that is right for your board is critical to the success of its efforts.

What will you evaluate? The board must first determine the standards that it will measure itself against. To begin, board

members should look over any job descriptions, code of ethics, and policies that define board responsibilities or operations.

Next, the board needs a brainstorming session to give members the opportunity to include other items to use as standards. These might include board responsibilities in areas such as:

- •legal matters
- •policy development and oversight
- •board operations and decision making
- •board and superintendent relations
- •school and community relations
- •planning
- •performance toward meeting goals
- •fiscal issues
- •media relations

Make your own list that fits your present board.

The next step is to look for the resources to help you develop an evaluation instrument. The board may already have an evaluation instrument or may request samples from the state school boards association. As you look at models and samples, judge them against the standards the board has listed. Select the items you wish to include in your instrument. You will be developing an instrument unique to your school board.

Are We Leading?

Take a few minutes to evaluate your board's leadership quotient in the following areas.

Has your board team:

- ❍ Yes ❍ No Established the direction for the district and expectations that are understood by staff and students?
- ❍ Yes ❍ No Developed a mission statement for the district and developed goals and objectives to implement its mission?
- ❍ Yes ❍ No Identified the district's strengths and weaknesses?
- ❍ Yes ❍ No Developed long-range plans for all district programs?
- ❍ Yes ❍ No Been willing to raise the standards for the district even if vocal factions disagree?
- ❍ Yes ❍ No Spent time with other community leaders/boards discussing and developing the long-range plans for your school district and community?
- ❍ Yes ❍ No Identified ways to share decision-making with parents, community, and staff?
- ❍ Yes ❍ No Established the priorities for the district through policy, not through the budget process?
- ❍ Yes ❍ No Decided what curriculum will be used in the district and then evaluated its effectiveness?
- ❍ Yes ❍ No Developed a process for evaluation of the board's leadership skills?
- ❍ Yes ❍ No Become involved in so many areas that the good time spent on district leadership and planning is diluted?

(Adapted from materials developed by Pat Fitzwater, educational consultant, Salem, Ore.)

Rationale for A Board Evaluation Process

- **Holds the board accountable** in the same manner that boards hold employees of the district accountable.
- **Allows individual members to reflect** on their own behavior and the behavioral performance of their colleagues.
- **Fosters open communication** among board members and the superintendent.
- **Improves decision making** by enhancing understanding of philosophies and goals.
- **Resolves differences of opinion** and challenges false perceptions.
- **Improves the professionalism** of the board and its meetings.
- **Allows new** board members the opportunity to **understand the process** of boardmanship and to get to know their colleagues.
- **Assists in identifying personal strengths** and weaknesses of individual board members as well as those of the board as a whole.
- **Provides a starting point for effective and productive goal setting** and long-range planning activities.

(from the National School Boards Association)

In developing the type of instrument you want to use, examine the various formats for questions and methods for scoring that will yield the results you are looking for.

There are two types of questions. Close-ended questions ask you to select a response such as *yes* or *no* or to choose from a range of responses. This allows for a quick response from board members.

Open-ended questions enable you to provide opinions or thoughts in narrative form. While this takes more time to complete, it allows members to communicate their thoughts and opinions on specific issues. Here are samples of both types.

A. Close-ended Questions

1. Has your board developed a mission statement for the district and the goals and objectives for implementation of the mission?

❍ Yes ❍ No ❍ Don't know

2. Is your school district achieving its mission? (circle one)

a. Yes, completely
b. Yes, primarily
c. Yes, partially
d. No, not the most important part
e. No, not at all
f. Don't know

3. The board regards setting goals and objectives, making long-range plans, establishing priorities, and developing policy as its major responsibilities

Completely				Not at all
1	2	3	4	5

B. Open-ended Questions

1. What is your understanding of the four leadership roles of a school board?

2. In what ways should community residents be asked to be involved in our schools?

An evaluation instrument with both types of questions may be the most successful approach.

Moving Ahead

Once the evaluation instrument is developed, your board can move ahead with the process. Each board member is given a questionnaire to complete independently and confidentially. The questionnaires are then turned over to a third party.

All evaluation responses are then compiled into one report. No individual is identified in the report. The board, in a discussion, can then use the results. This is where you get to the core of the evaluation process: the opportunity for board members to discuss the issues and concerns and to get to know and appreciate each other's point of view.

This is where you can also practice one of Stephen Covey's Seven Habits—"empathetic listening." The ground rule of empathetic listening is that you do not get the opportunity to make your point until you can restate the other person's point to his or her satisfaction. In doing so, you are building trust and promoting effective working relationships.

Other methods for success

Other methods can be used for generating discussion about the board's performance. Computer-based polling techniques, such as Voice Poll services, enable the board to respond anonymously to questions in real-time using keypads and a computer-generated program. The program instantly tabulates responses and displays them graphically. This technique adapts well to retreat settings.

Another method, which is less-structured, is an open-ended discussion to explore the board's strengths and weaknesses. A facilitator challenges the board to help identify the most significant governance issues and then helps it determine the opportunities for improvement.

The greatest benefits are gained during the facilitated discussion sessions. It is in these sessions that issues, questions, and concerns arise that will become part of the action plan for improvement.

A plan for implementation, which includes a list of areas to be addressed, is a key component for success. The plan will also allow the board to determine the priorities for action and establish a timeline. Then the responsibility for implementing each action item can be assigned.

It doesn't end with a plan

We frequently hear about plans that end up on the shelf collecting dust. That is why the job descriptions for the board president and superintendent should include the responsibility for oversight of the board

Board Implementation Plan

Action: To develop a plan and schedule for the board's education about emerging issues that affect public education.

Strategy	Responsible Person	Timeline
1. Appoint ad hoc committee to research issues and resources and propose a plan	president	September board meeting
2. Approve plan	all board members	October
3. Purchase education publications for board to review	superintendent & committee	November
4. Attend conferences	all board members	Within the year
5. Schedule discussion sessions	president	December

Evidence of Success: Positive responses to the sessions and greater understanding gained.

evaluation and implementation process. One method to help keep evaluation on the agenda is to maintain a board calendar or yearly agenda where key items are identified for board review.

Self-evaluation–the board's assessment of its own performance, structure and function–is perhaps the board's most important education and development activity. Regular evaluation can facilitate improvement, motivate board members to work toward improvement, and provide an opportunity for updating board goals.

Board self-evaluation is a "best practice" for school boards because it encourages members to take their responsibilities seriously and it helps improve their skills. It also provides guidance to the board in moving the school district staff forward and gives people in the community some assurance that the district is in good hands in this rapidly changing environment.

Kathie Rozovicks is director of communication for the Wisconsin School Boards Association (122 W. Washington Ave., Madison, WI 53703). This article appeared in the July issue of the association's magazine *School News*, published at $30 a year.

The Noah Principle—You get no prize for predicting rain. The reward comes from building arks.

Al Holliday
Journal *Editor*

Why Can't Schools Be Operated the Way Businesses Are?

I have several excellent reasons

by Joseph V. Oravitz

At a recent conference of business people, our state secretary of education stated: "If you ran a business the way officials of many public school districts operate them, you'd be in trouble." His remarks were made at a conference at a graduate school of business meeting at the University of Pittsburgh.

Looking strictly at the words would have many in public school governance and management positions cringe with displeasure. And, for some, it would signal another item of bad news about public schools that has plagued us since the *A Nation at Risk* report in 1982.

However, in looking beyond the words of criticism, I believe his comments prompt an opportunity for us to seek out the truth. We should address the concerns that many business people, school administrators, school boards and the tax-paying public have about the way schools are run.

The truth is: **No business could run a profitable operation and produce a quality product if it had to operate under the rules, regulations, laws and court decrees imposed on school districts.**

Allow me to cite a few examples of significant differences between private sector business and public education that has led me to these conclusions:

1. Private companies select their board of directors based on the contribution they can bring (prestige, expertise, linkages, support, etc.) to the company effort. All board members are collectively focused on attaining a successful and profitable venture. The boards of directors of public schools are elected by the community based on a political process required by law.

2. Corporation directors are usually paid for their service; public school directors are not.

3. Business owners can hire the personnel they need with virtually no restrictions except the requirements **they** impose. Schools are **highly regulated in all areas** of personnel employment and must meet stringent state requirements for filling most professional positions.

4. Business owners can assign and deploy their staff in ways that produce the greatest cost advantages, efficiencies of operations and highest quality of work effort. Schools are not permitted (by law and regulation) to operate with the same flexibility and must adhere to stringent certification standards tied to very specific job/teaching assignments. Failure to use

personnel as required by state certification regulations can lead to stiff financial penalties.

5. Business can adjust the workforce complement as business demands dictate. Schools are not even permitted to furlough (layoff) a single professional employee for economic reasons. No private enterprise operation could ever operate under such a restraint; in fact, most public sector agencies don't either. School boards stand virtually alone in the inability to control the size of their workforce, even when there are insufficient revenues to meet payroll.

6. In schools, employee suspensions, reductions-in-force, transfers and firings are governed by federal and state court requirements, state administrative legal procedures and collective bargaining provisions. To dismiss a tenured employee usually takes years and tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees. Business is only bound by applicable laws related mainly to age and sex discrimination.

7. Business has numerous ways to raise capital (stock offerings, bond debt, sales of subsidiaries or product lines, licensing arrangements, etc.). School boards only can raise taxes, principally through the use of the property tax.

8. Business officials can invest earnings and cash flows in numerous investment areas. Schools are restricted, by law, to low-yield, government investment instruments.

9. Business owners are not required to accept low-bid purchases. Schools are bound by extensive purchasing procedures that are directed mainly at low-bid results.

The truth is: ***No business could run a profitable operation and produce a quality product*** if it had to operate under the rules, regulations, laws and court decrees imposed on school districts.

10. Schools must adhere to numerous state and federal program mandates, many of which are imposed without adequate (or any) funding. Business also has been subjected to some of the same mandates (air quality, workplace safety, etc.). However, these costs can be recouped through tax write-offs, depreciation, investment credits, product pricing and similar financial tools available in the free enterprise system.

11. Business people typically makes significant investments in the area of research and development to seek out new product ventures, improve quality of current products, increase the efficiency of operations, and control or reduce unit costs. Schools spend virtually no funds on R&D and rely solely on state and federal agencies, private foundations or institutions of higher education with enough resources to identify quality and cost issues, and suggest ways to improve. It's probably fair to say that there is no organized R&D function available to public education and this critical function is totally ignored as a cost of doing business and improving product quality.

These examples are not intended to explain the current state of school operations and quality of public education. They are, however, provided as clear proof that **public schools are different from private business** in many respects, particularly in the heavily regulated areas of personnel hiring, deployment and retention. Because schools are a personnel intensive industry (65-75% of total budgets are staff-related costs), putting schools on the same playing field with private industry would go a long way toward improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public schools. Releasing schools from other heavily regulated and bureaucratic red tape also would have a dramatic impact on school operations.

I urge business leaders of our state to put their efforts behind those of our school boards association to "free-up" public schools from excessive and restrictive mandates imposed on public education. I also call on the secretary of education to use his power to reduce government mandates to only those deemed absolutely necessary for the protection of the public interest.

Perhaps, one day we can all say that schools are being run as well or better than most successful businesses because government, business and school leaders took the time to examine the mandates that have prevented this from happening for too many years.

Joseph V. Oravitz is executive director of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association. This commentary was first published in *Information Legislative Service* newsletter of the association (774 Limekiln Road, New Cumberland PA 17070). The restrictions he refers to apply to Pennsylvania, although most state legislatures have imposed a variety of mandates and restrictions to similar ends.

20 *Myths* and Facts about Our Education System

Public education is the most lied-about, misreported story in America

by Forrest J. (Frosty) Troy

Myth Versus Facts

I unashamedly speak for public education--warts and all--and have done so for 30 years, delivering more than 2,800 speeches. My remarks are not Pollyannaish. Public education has serious problems in the inner cities, and I don't ignore that. I'm not in the self-esteem business.

I've spent 40 years as an award-winning journalist, including a Pulitzer Prize nomination, dealing with hard facts and how those facts are interpreted. But outside of the major cities and rural pockets of poverty, America has a superbly successful public school system--certainly among the best in the world.

Here are my comments about myths being spread about public education as opposed to the facts of these matters.

Myth 1: **Teachers teach only nine months so why do they bellyache about low salaries?**

Fact: Repeated studies show this isn't true. If you count hours worked, the average teacher does in nine months what it takes regular 40-hour workers 11.5 months to do.

Myth 2: **American students score less well than kids in almost every other country.**

Fact: This is the biggest canard of them all. America's smart kids are as smart or smarter than those in any other country. Test scores have recovered after a huge dip due to integration of public education. Separate was never equal.

Myth 3: **Twenty-five percent of students drop out, evidence of how ineffective public schools are.**

Fact: More horse hockey. The dropout rate last year was 11 percent. Add to that a record-high graduation rate and a whopping 450,000 GEDs issued last year and America is among the best educated nations in the world.

Myth 4: **We have students graduating from public schools who can't even read their diplomas.**

Fact: You bet! They are among the nearly six million children in special education—most will never read well but they're getting their chance based on whatever gifts they bring to school. It's the best unreported story in America.

Myth 5: **Unions are running the public schools.**

Fact: Don't extrapolate to more than 14,400 school districts the mindless contracts (and overpaid janitors) in cities such as Cleveland, New York City or Chicago.

Myth 6: **The PTA is a tool of teacher unions.**

Fact: This had to be dreamed up by someone who never has been to a PTA meeting. I ought to know. I am not only a PTA veteran, but I hold the National PTA's Distinguished Service to Children Award.

Myth 7: **Teachers are recruited from the dregs of college graduates.**

Fact: Nearly half of the three million teachers in public schools have master's degrees. The political climate is so hateful toward public schools, a third quit within 10 years. Who can blame them? The committed stick, and most perform magnificently.

Myth 8: **Public educators are afraid of competition. That's why they oppose charter schools and vouchers.**

Fact: Only a nitwit public educator would favor vouchers, which suck funds from public school systems. Voucher is another way of spelling "segregation"–this time along class lines. Even the charter school movement is hardly the howling success predicted. Been to Arizona? Checked Michigan test scores?

Myth 9: **Kids can't read today because schools don't exclusively use phonics.**

Fact: America's 4th-grade readers just outperformed every country in the world except Finland, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Phonics isn't the only way to learn to read. As any good reading teacher knows, this skill often requires a blend of whole language instruction with phonics.

Myth 10: **Look how few American kids make it through college.**

Fact: America is second only to Japan in the college graduation rate (by two percentage points). America exceeds every country in the world in graduate-level completion.

Myth 11: **Entering test scores prove public schools don't adequately prepare students for college.**

Fact: Any senior can take the SAT or the ACT. As many as 17 percent of those taking the SAT never had earned above a C in their classes. The College Board, which owns the SAT, decries constant misuse of test data by critics with an anti-public education agenda. The SAT score on reasoning just hit a 25-year high. Three out of four test takers this year scored higher than the national average. The ACT is at a five-year high. (My dream is to someday give the ACT exam to members of Congress!)

Religious Right Assault

The assault from radio and television evangelists is the hardest for educators to swallow. Pat Robertson's 700 Club is a nonstop critic, claiming that public schools are teaching a religion, or what he and others have dubbed secular humanism. What Robertson is really after is taxpayer-supported vouchers for Christian and parochial schools and home-schooled students. After he bowed out of his race for president, Robertson said he had it wrong--the way to take over the country was to start with school boards and legislative offices. On that score he's right.

Among this aggregation are TV's ubiquitous D. James Kennedy, the Old-Time Gospel Hour's Jerry Falwell, Focus on the Family's James Dobson, Jimmy Swaggart and several dozen radio and TV clones. They have favorite targets in the public schools; sex education ("Honey, they found you on a stump in the forest!"), school-to-work programs (send every kid to college, able or not) and multi-culturalism (if you are not a white fundamentalist, your forefathers didn't exist).

They rage endlessly against condoms in the schools, yet fewer than two percent of schools even make condoms available. The Catholic hierarchy's chronic assaults are designed to pick up federal aid to religious schools via vouchers.

Critics include Phyllis Schlafly, who never spent a day of her life in a public school, yet she produces Eagle Forum reports stating the public education "is a form of child abuse." *Forbes* magazine relentlessly publishes ignorant stories designed for only one purpose–elimination of union affiliation for public educators. There are good unions and bad unions just as there are good magazines and *Forbes*.

Don't be surprised to learn how few educators, especially among three million classroom teachers, possess the ammunition necessary to refute the critics. Teaching is essentially a lonely profession–the classroom door closes and the entire day is spent with children, with only a short break for lunch. The evening is spent grading papers and working on lesson plans. Teachers know what's going on in the classroom and their school but few have the foggiest notion about the system of which they are a part. **F.J.T.**

Myth 12: Today's students need to take the rigorous courses provided in the good old days.

Fact: I wish somebody who could talk slow enough would explain it to the likes of Rush Limbaugh, William F. Buckley or G. Gordon Liddy that there is a report entitled "The Condition of Education 1995" with 60 indicators related to preschool, elementary, secondary and postsecondary education. It revealed stunning improvement in public education. Between 1985-1995 the percentage of high school graduates taking core courses increased 47 percent. Critics who think schools are soft ought to check today's math, science and social studies texts. They make yesterday's stuff look like kindergarten.

Myth 13: Public schools locked God out of the classroom.

Fact: The U.S. Supreme Court banned sectarian prayer. Schools that have ignored that opinion have lost every single court case. Students prayer is not illegal–it happens every time there's a final exam.

Myth 14: **Teachers are secular humanists.**

Fact: Oh really? Public educators lead all other professions and occupations in teaching Sunday school, according to a survey published in *Parade* magazine.

Myth 15: **Public schools don't teach values.**

Fact: Define values. Nearly a third of students receive their only hot meal of the day in public schools. For thousands, the only hug they get is in public schools. Teachers spend large sums of personal funds (average $400 last year) for things like workbooks and supplies. Thousands of teachers sponsor everything from drama to chess clubs on their own time, often without reimbursement.

Myth 16: **The National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers seek only higher salaries for less work.**

Fact: The NEA and AFT spend huge sums of money on grants, scholarships and programs to support reform efforts and quality schooling initiatives. I have searched in vain for a list of positive programs financed by the critics.

Myth 17: **School boards have outlived their usefulness. Parents ought to run the schools.**

Fact: More than 77,000 school board members are parents and community leaders. Few are reimbursed for their time and selfless efforts.

Myth 18: **There would be more money for schools were it not for overpaid administrators.**

Fact: School administrators make a fraction of what they would earn running the same payroll and plant operation in the private sector.

Myth 19: **We don't need school boards—they just get in the way.**

Fact: Examples of waste, graft, corruption and illegalities already are emanating from charter schools, which have no comparable boards. School boards are designed to provide accountability, and they do. Check the voucher disaster in Cleveland.

Myth 20: **Catholic schools do a better job with less money.**

Fact: The average Catholic per-pupil cost of $3,200 compares with the $5,884 in public schools, but that's where the comparison ends. Public schools are required to provide regular education, vocational education, special education, counseling, dropout prevention, alternative education, attendance control, bilingual education, compensatory education, after-school athletics, regular student transportation, student activities, health and psychological programs, food services, security and violence prevention and much better employee benefits such as a living wage and retirement programs.

Whom To Believe?

Who are you going to believe, the critics or the consumers? The annual Gallup education poll showed again that 65 percent of the parents who send 52 million

children to public schools award those schools honors grades. But only 20 percent of those who have no connection with the schools grant them honors. They get their information from the popular media–the sorriest possible source. (A new Public Agenda poll reveals a 71 percent approval rating of public schools by patrons.)

Chester Finn, a former assistant secretary of education in charge of anti-public school propaganda, has the gall to write that parents should not believe what they personally experience. In other words, they are too dumb to know what a good school is. His motive? Finn is heavily invested in commercial privatization of public schools, writing the curriculum for the Edison Project, a privatization initiative. (To its shame, *Education Week* publishes him regularly without letting readers know of his financial connections.)

Why are public schools in the crosshairs when 90 percent of them are as good as any in the world? One reason is that major news media outlets are in the cities with the majority of failed schools. The blather from network news is almost always negative. Too many viewers with no first-hand knowledge extrapolate those conditions to all public schools. Add to this a heavy dose of racism, religious right fervor and nonstop right-wing slander on talk radio. Stir in 60 percent of adults with no connection with schools today in an environment of declining social and political cohesion, and you have a recipe for disaster.

Selling the Sizzle

The crisis, if there is one, does not reside in the typical U.S. classroom, and it doesn't infect a majority of students. Scientific acumen isn't needed to recognize that the bedrock of successful education is nurturing parents who play with their infants and read to their toddlers, who belong to the PTA and volunteer in the classroom; who send disciplined children to school. These are the same parents who support school bond issues, vote in school board elections and see education as an investment, not an expense.

If I could go one-on-one with every school administrator in America, my message would be simple: The failure isn't in the product but in the marketing. Or, as they say on Madison Avenue, "You don't sell the steak, you sell the sizzle." Public education's public relations are woefully inadequate. Here's how to merchandise the product:

No. 1 Never let a newsletter or any other correspondence out of any school that doesn't contain at least one or more positive strokes–latest test scores, individual student and/or educator achievements, etc. (My facts have shown up in hundreds of school bulletins.)

No. 2 A speaker's bureau is a must for civic clubs, chambers of commerce, etc. Civic organizations are the heartbeat of any community and they love to see and hear kids.

No. 3 Create a committee on correspondence. Don't give the local news media, the critical letter writers or anyone else a free shot. Fight back with facts. Challenge the mistaken, the misinformed and the outright prevaricator while acknowledging honest criticism.

Forrest Troy is editor of the Oklahoma Observer (P.O. Box 53371, Oklahoma City, Ok 73152) and is a frequent speaker in support of public education. The article is reprinted with permission from September 1998 issue of ***The School Administrator***, published by AASA, 1801 N. Moore St., Arlington, VA 22209 at $40 a year.

The only way citizens will know the standards of excellence you seek for students is if you tell them. Don't expect your local news media to do this job for you.

Al Holliday
Journal Editor

"Are we here to give children a helping hand or are we here to measure their brains with a yard stick?" asked Father O'Malley of Sister Mary Benedict.

"The Bells of St. Marys"

The three Rs for wooing the public:

Respect Reassurance Recognition

by Dorothy Rich

Educators are being asked to pay increased attention to the three Rs–reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic–as the basics are called. At the same time, all of us responsible for education worry about goals, standards and achievement. We work hard to raise them; we work very hard. Yet, the public just doesn't seem to want to give us a break.

Is this any surprise? We sit in these big buildings, and we're surrounded by mountains of paper. There's never enough time in the day. Most of our conversations are about problems.

We are quite busy–often too busy. We tend to forget that the kinds of relationships that we establish with parents and community members can matter the most.

The family and the community outside the school walls have been shown to be more significant in children's achievement than we previously had believed. In this time of fast-paced change, when everything seems to be whirling about us, what our publics need are the other important Rs–respect, reassurance, and recognition.

The beauty of these Rs is that they can build children's achievement and woo the public at the same time.

How do we do it? We have to show students, parents and all others out there that we care about them.

We want them–we need them–to care about the local school. And, it should be clear by now, with the growing interest in vouchers, charter schools and alternative schools, that caring is not automatic. We have a wooing job to do.

Do we have time for this when we have educating to do? We must find the time. We have no choice.

When we need the public to care about the schools, we have to care about the public.

We suggest that educational leaders consider this checklist of basic principles for the development of school and district plans for wooing the public. Think of these as directions for mapping strategy.

Build respect

• Set educational responsibilities for the family. This might not sound like wooing but it is. It sends a message to parents that they are important partners in the educational process. Moreover, it sends the vital message that every family has strengths and that these must be mobilized on behalf of their children.

•Make school schedules convenient for families. Try to find ways to overcome the problem caused by conflicting schedules of working parents and teachers. A growing number of districts provide contracts that call for parent-teacher conferences in the evenings or at other times when parents can attend. This means restructuring teacher time, and it's worth it.

•Undertake collaborative efforts to reach families. Form networks with other agencies in the community. Help teachers work with mental health agencies, community groups, businesses, and the media. Teachers need time to develop educational networks. Community groups such as the PTA and the American Association of Retired Persons can join to provide such services as mentoring and apprenticeships.

•Use schools for community needs. By increasingly using school facilities to serve community needs, schools position themselves to be more than just suppliers of services. They can become facilitators of learning for communities.

This new focus need not expand the school staff's workload. What it does is extend the school's impact as an important education resource for the old and the young, before and after school hours, all year long.

Supply reassurance

•Provide practical information families need. Research underscores parents' readiness to learn more about how to help their children. Information for families in easy-to-read, easy-to-use leaflets can be distributed from every school and at places like doctors' offices and supermarkets.

These materials are already written and ready for use from a number of sources (including the Home and School Institute). You don't have to write everything from scratch.

Families want to know early on how to help children learn. They do not want to wait until a problem concerning their child develops or is diagnosed.

•Offer a realistic picture of what schools can accomplish. Build public awareness about education, the many roles and services the school provides, its basic strengths, and the challenges and problems encountered by families and schools today. Work with the local media, particularly television, to develop programs that can create a strong awareness of what even the best schools can and cannot do.

•Encourage involvement at all levels of schooling. Family involvement in the early grades needs to change when children reach the secondary years.

Studies indicate that teenagers still view their parents as the most influential people in their lives, but communication between teens and parents often is difficult.

School efforts focusing on parent/child communication can allay the fear of these teens who feel that no one cares about them any more and their schooling lacks meaning.

•Provide an active role for fathers. Find ways to encourage fathers to be more involved directly in the care and education of their children and in their children's schools. Send home materials directed at the men in children's lives. Use local cable TV and radio to place public service messages that support the image of the "macho" man as caregiver to children, not just family provider.

•Provide training and information for teachers. Part of the new and enhanced role for teachers is integrating what is learned outside the classroom with what is learned on the inside. It means working with adults as well as with children.

Experience with our institute's School and Family-Community Involvement training for educators indicates that most teachers have not been prepared for on-the-job work with families. Teachers need to learn the strategies for reaching and teaching adults.

Provide recognition

•Start early–before children come to school. Provide information for parents about their significant educational role starting with a child's birth. Education for successful schooling can begin with in-hospital programs sponsored by schools. Offer

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

new parents practical tips and information on how to help their infants develop to their fullest potential.

•**Establish connection with family daycare.** Schools can provide training for family daycare providers about education through a variety of ways from print brochures to local cable channels.

•**Create helpful roles for the private sector.** Provide businesses with information and materials to offer support for the family-school relationship. Businesses can contribute more than volunteers for the classroom.

They can give employees time off to participate in parent-teacher conferences, and they can distribute parenting information at the workplace that helps reduce stress and work-home conflicts.

•**Let people know they are appreciated.** In an impersonal world, where people tend to know us by numbers rather than names, it is vital to ensure that each parent is recognized and feels valued by the school. Does it matter if they come to meetings? How do they know? Does the school staff know their names? If not, how fast can this be taken care of and in how many ways?

•**Share news about what has been accomplished.** Ensure that school accomplishments and those of families are widely shared through a variety of media and a local civic and community group meetings. The accomplishments of schools and students are community accomplishments. They need to be presented in that light so everyone feels this sense of success.

There is no shame in wooing our publics. These three Rs–respect, reassurance, and recognition–are intimately connected with academics. The goal is to build community support not only for increased funding to support the school budget or a bond issue, but also to build morale–a sense of investment for everyone in the community.

Dorothy Rich is the founder and president of the Home and School Institute in Washington, D.C. She is the author of MegaSkills and creator of the MegaSkills teacher training programs. Her new book, *What Do We Say? What Do We Do?*, has just been released by Forge Books. This article first appeared in *School Board News*.

For more information, contact the MegaSkills Education Center of the Home and School Institute, 1500 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005. Telephone: 202-466-3633. Fax: 202-833-1400. Internet: www.MegaSkillsHSI.org.

What Schools Are Expected To Do:

And This List is Not Complete

by David Alan Gilman

As schools have assumed more responsibilities, so have long-suffering school administrators added more tasks to their daily chores. It is no wonder that principals and superintendents experience stress sickness. Indeed, the German words for stress sickness (manager krankheiten) translates to manager sickness. Many administrators we have known have found it necessary to resort to taking mood altering drugs just to cope.

As the public worries about test scores and student mores, it is well to reflect once again on just how much schools are required to do. While this list is comprehensive, it is not complete and never could be. However, in an effort to make it more comprehensible, an attempt has been made to provide a taxonomy (as in Benjamin Bloom) of things schools are expected to do.

Real world applications. Preparation for the world of work and for being grown up are among the tasks schools are expected to perform. Specifically, school are required to...assist in bilingual language development...provide career awareness...develop skills for the entry into a specific field of work...develop the ability to reason...foster metric education...help students develop political know-how...provide vocational training...stress bicycle safety and pedestrian safety...teach computer and keyboard use...teach conservation of natural resources...teach consumer education...teach driver training...teach first aid procedures...teach management of money, property, and resources...teach newspaper use...teach telephone manners and etiquette...train students in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and monitoring for fitness...and...assist students with minigrant applications.

The school curriculum. At one time, it could be said that the school curriculum was everything that students in the school were studying. However, this definition is no longer adequate. Nevertheless, schools are expected to cover each of the following in their course of study...promote an understanding of the heritage of our country...promote physical fitness...provide instruction in good health care...provide sex education...teach geography...teach good nutrition habits...teach revisionist history...teach science (both evolutionary and creationist)...and...education about global society.

Staff development. It was once a responsibility of professional educators to develop their competencies and to remain current. However, the schools have assumed much of this responsibility. Accordingly, the schools are expected

*Schools are now attempting to...*arrange for children to obtain shoes, hats, coats, gloves, eyeglasses, and appropriate underwear...

to...create awareness of personality for both faculty and staff...understand learning, leadership, and fighting styles...provide workshops in current developments and trends...provide released time and compensation for educators to attend conferences...maintain a professional library...promote interdisciplinary thematic units, teaming, and development of the "whole child."

Extracurricular. Activities of the school cannot be overlooked. Among ones schools are expected to accomplish are...provide additional experiences in physical education, athletics, and the fine arts...provide students with experiences that emulate business and industry...maintain a variety of clubs, activities, and social events...organize and supervise after-school, summer, and weekend activities...organize and conduct field trips.

Civil and legal responsibilities. Schools must serve the community through mediation and cooperation. Schools find it necessary to...cooperate with police, welfare, and juvenile investigations...maintain birth information, age certification, and child labor permits...mediate birth parent/guardian/adoptive parent disputes... mediate parent custody disputes...t each legal process and specific laws (sexual harassment)...inform about local political mechanisms...and... search and seize.

Personal services to students. Schools are finding an increasing number of services occurring to students and their families. Schools are now attempting to...arrange for children to obtain shoes, hats, coats, gloves, eyeglasses, and appropriate underwear...assist in career planning... assist parents in securing information and records about their children...counsel students with problems...detect and report child abuse...develop skills of novice and preservice teachers...do eye testing...do job placement...eradicate scabies, head lice, and other diseases...give inoculations...promote collaboration among staff...protect career information...facilitate the practice of safe sex and birth control...provide latch key facilities...provide pregnancy counseling... provide transportation...teach bus safety, bicycle safety, and gang education...serve hot lunches and breakfasts...assist in charity fund raising...counsel parents...refer families...provide family and group therapy opportunities...diagnose and treat handicaps...provide English as a second language and bilingual education...and...provide preschool programs for at-risk children.

Special education. Special education clients increase at a constant rate of four and one half percent each year. Responsibilities involving special students are:...give special instruction for the hard of hearing, the blind, and the neurologically impaired...teach the gifted...train the mentally retarded...correct speech deficiencies... change diapers...train life skills...and...con-

In addition to knowledge and skills, schools must *promote attitudes and values that society prefers.* Among them are...*encourage reflection...foster neatness, punctuality, and the "good old American" work ethic...*

trol children who are out of control.

Attitudes and values. In addition to knowledge and skills, schools must promote attitudes and values that society prefers. Among them are:...building a feeling of self-worth and self-respect...build respect for the worth and dignity of a person...develop curiosity and a thirst for learning...develop skills for the enjoyment of leisure time...encourage reflection...foster neatness, punctuality, and the "good old American" work ethic...promote good sportsmanship...promote positive life choices...promote pride in self, family, school, and community...teach classroom, court side, pool side, table, and bathroom manners...teach cooperation, competition, and coordination...teach social skills...provide opportunities for multi-generational/ multi-cultural experiences...and...foster character education.

Social services. Schools are expected to assume many responsibilities that parents once took care of. Among social services provided by schools are:...assist in disease prevention...avoid religion...build patriotism and loyalty to the ideals of democracy...develop an appreciation of other people and other cultures...develop civic responsibility...discuss religious holidays without any religion connections...dispense surplus milk...eliminate sex discrimination...follow due process procedures...foster integration...inculcate morals, ethics, and values...make the teacher available to the school community...promote civil rights and racial tolerance...promote collaboration among students...promote the use of information...provide parenting guidelines... serve as positive role models...educate about drug, alcohol, and tobacco use and abuse...teach HIV/AIDS awareness...teach humaneness and individual responsibility...teach pride in work...teach the principles of free enterprise...provide stranger danger training... and...provide death education.

...And, oh yes,...teach reading, writing, and math.

David Alan Gilman, editor of Contemporary Education, observed that "some years ago Caroline Warner, then state superintendent of Schools, Arizona, compiled a list of the duties and responsibilities of America's schools. It is time to update the list to reflect the increase in obligations that schools have accrued in recent years."
This article appeared in Contemporary Education, Winter of 1998 (published by the School of Education, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN 47809 at $12 a year).

Communication *Commentary*

Board Meetings Can Be Minefields—

Misunderstanding will be earned by failure to listen and respond.

by Brad Hughes

How school board meetings are conducted and how the public perceives those meetings can negate positive feelings community members have for the school system.

Your own board meeting typically may be a calm discussion of and actions on routine matters that keep the school system operating and provide the resources for student achievement. However unintentional, many school board meeting agendas are something akin to a minefield, where any direction you choose to move can be disastrous.

Here are three recent Kentucky situations, "ripped from the headlines," as they say, that demonstrate missteps in the minefields:

Scene #1: A school board meeting a few weeks after a teen-ager had been found carrying a loaded handgun into his school. A father addressed the board about his concerns and asked when parents "will know something's being done to protect our children." Another parent asked the board to tighten security and take other steps to prevent similar incidents.

The board thanked the parents for their comments, but did not respond further. That non-response became a major topic of discussion at a PTA meeting the following week.

Scene #2: Another school board meeting in another district but the same issue–a parent raising questions about safety after a gun was brought to school. In this case, board members and the superintendent listened and openly discussed the situation and steps that had been taken. And in the end, the superintendent offered to meet later with the parent.

Unfortunately, all this took place after the concerned parents were required to wait for the conclusion of a three hour-and-15 minute closed hearing on other issues.

Scene #3: Yet another school board meeting in yet another district. In this situation, a dozen employees asked to be heard regarding concerns they had about working conditions. Representatives of the employee group already had met with the superintendent and a committee of board advisers.

When the first speaker took the podium, she was cut off in mid-sentence by a board member who said the board had no authority to hear personnel issues. After some unpleasant exchanges about chain of command and the board's role (or lack thereof), the employees left the meeting unheard.

Based on newspaper accounts and conversations with observers of each meeting, it's not tough to cite these as examples of school boards unsuccessful at meandering through their meetings' minefields. Perhaps the boards' actions were based on advice

"People in America expect and want choice, including choice in their schools. They value what they choose over what is just given to them."

—Jennifer Waymon Grossman

they had received. Bad advice is like a poorly drawn map of a minefield, and it sure blew up in the faces of these school boards.

Let's take the scenes in reverse order.

• **Up first, the personnel case...**

Since the passage of the Kentucky Education Reform Act in 1990, some folks have tried to burn into school board members' minds that they cannot have anything to do with anything related to personnel matters. But this is untrue. False. Just plain wrong.

Yes, school board members must take great care when it comes to personnel issues. Yes, the superintendent is the final authority on personnel issues. But doesn't the school board hire the superintendent? Doesn't the school board annually evaluate the job the superintendent has done? So if personnel management is a major part of the superintendent's job, how is the board to evaluate his or her job performance if the board has cut itself off from the issue?

Whoever said that school boards can't *listen* to matters involving workplace issues? The board may not be able to *order* a specific resolution, but *it most certainly can direct the superintendent to investigate the problem and report back to the board on his or her decision and action.*

When it comes to personnel, school boards must be careful. They must be clear in what they can do. However, they shouldn't close themselves off from concerns of the district workforce.

• **Now about the parents waiting** three hours-plus to address the board on the safety of their children....

Board meeting agendas are not written in stone. Some public bodies misinterpret the law which says you must publicize an advance agenda. That doesn't mean you can't change the order of things for the convenience of the public. It *is* a *public* meeting we're talking about here.

Many Kentucky school boards today have designated points on the agenda for public comment. A few have two places: one spot for comment early on agenda items and a second time later on for comments to the board and administration in general. But there's nothing that prevents the board from rearranging placements on its agenda.

People in public education moan and groan about lack of community support and lack of parental involvement. Then why allow parents, sufficiently concerned about school safety to come out at night to a board meeting, to sit idle for hours waiting for their turn on the agenda? In the cited case, *the entire board meeting lasted four hours and 20 minutes–only 65 minutes longer than the closed hearings.* Surely, the other business of the evening, including the concerns of these parents, could have been taken up earlier.

• **Finally, what about the school board imitating** the famous three monkeys—See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil?

In the same month, a different Kentucky school board heard from parents concerned

about safety. In this case, it wasn't a loaded handgun, but a BB gun. Yet these board members and this superintendent responded with a discussion, documented by the local newspaper, of the event, of the lack of similar events at the school, of safety actions already taken, and of offers for future meetings with the parents and finally of encouragement that anyone with knowledge of similar events come forth with that information.

Parents–regardless of whether it's one alone or a hundred in a group–deserve more than silence when they come to a school board meeting to talk about their concerns for their children. Board members don't have to make promises. They don't have to cite, on the spot, specific actions that will be taken. But where's the problem in stating the school board's shared concerns, its commitment to safe schools or its call for ideas from parents and other community members?

Each of these school systems may have outstanding programs and tremendous public support. But how much more support could have been garnered if the employees had been heard, if the parents' concerns had been heard earlier or if board members had demonstrated their own dedication to a safe learning environment? Would these choices –*and they were and are choices*–have changed public support for a school system? Maybe not. But any of those choices would have been an act of good board relations. That's something worth being known for.

And it's a message worth getting out.

Brad Hughes is director of communication services for the Kentucky School Boards Assn. (260 Democrat Dr., Frankfort, KY 40601)

Consider These Tips to Market Your Schools

"People in America expect and want choice, including choice in their schools. They value what they choose over what is *just given* to them," according to Jennifer Waymon Grossman. "The reality of choice means that marketing is no longer a luxury," she adds. "People need tangible evidence that their public schools are succeeding."

Grossman is the director of communications for the Colorado Association of School Boards and president-elect of the National School Public Relations Association.

Marketing is building trust in the schools and school leadership, she says. "It's all about finding out from people what they want, don't want, and so forth in their schools and what we can do to make the schools what they want. Marketing revolves around people's values–finding out what people value and then delivering the product."

The "Three Rs of Marketing," according to Grossman are:

• Reputation. "You choose your reputation and have control over it. You do not choose your image. Reputation goes deeper than image. It is based on people's experience with your product or service. Image is created by someone else. To build a good reputation, people's experience with your schools must reflect the image you project." Grossman believes the school board's role in developing reputation is agreeing on a mission, focusing on student achievement, expecting a real connection to the community, and being willing to change the "product."

• Research. "Research is the key to a good marketing program. It is the basis upon which decisions are made. Research helps us determine what changes we must make in our services. It also can help us find out how our messages are perceived by different people." The school board's role in research, she suggests, is making a commitment to data-driven decisions, holding administrators accountable for providing data-driven recommendations to the board, resisting the urge to consider three phone calls a mandate, and listening for the silent voices. "School district leaders should set up ways to get continuous feedback so that they can develop and refine their niche (what they do best) and keep up with customers' changing needs and desires.

• Relationships. "The mass media is effective at building relationships, but people influence behavior," Grossman states. "To build relationships, you should target opinion leaders and get them to influence others. Remember to choose opinion leaders who are the most influential." The school board's role in building relationships is understanding and using its unique position as a community leader ("The board is part of the establishment, but also part of the community"), leading by example ("Have a good relationship among the board-administrative team"), and being in a constant campaign mode for the district.

To be marketing savvy, Grossman says, officials of school districts need to identify their unique selling point, refine it into a message or slogan, and repeat, repeat, repeat!

Wisconsin School News, Feb. 1998. Wisconsin School Boards Association.

School-to-Work Programs Pay Off for Students

Calexico, California, is a rural community of some 25,000 people situated on the U.S.-Mexican border, 120 miles east of San Diego. The Calexico Unified School District serves 7,000 students and six elementary schools. The community enjoys a close association with neighbors across the border in Mexicali, the state capital of Baja California, Mexico.

The staff at Calexico High School has developed an innovative community-wide involvement program, which has effectively linked the school with various city and county entities and has done much to integrate audiences and real-world experience for students.

Calexico High School Service-Learning program was started three years ago as part of the restructuring process and is now a graduation requirement. High School students are expected to serve their community 20 hours or more for each year they are at Calexico High School. The community has reached out to provide opportunities for

the students. The city of Calexico, the Chamber of Commerce, local businesses and service clubs have opened their doors to assist students in applying knowledge learned in the classroom and the world of work.

Through collaboration, strong ties have been developed with the community. An example of this school/community participation and collaboration was seen in 1996, when 96% of all volunteers at the Olympic Torch Relay celebration were students at Calexico High School. During the all-day event, 150 students were busy assisting local police with crowd control, serving over 500 meals to VIPs, assisting local clubs and organizations in their food and entertainment booths, setting up and breaking down the stage for the formal program.

Since then, service-learning opportunities have opened up for students. In conjunction with the City of Calexico Beautification Commission, students have participated in community-wide graffiti paint-out campaigns and senior citizens' yard clean-ups. Students serve as tutors at local schools and agencies such as Neighborhood House and work closely with Americorps workers to improve their literacy. Students participate in local events sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, such as the Fourth of July Picnic, Snowbird and Christmas parade. Students also serve as official greeters at national and international events scheduled by the city.

In 1997, the school district received a Learn and Serve America grant from the Corporation for National Service to infuse Service-Learning into the academic curriculum. This funding has permitted the expansion of Service-Learning to junior high and elementary schools in the district and has forged curriculum levels between Service-Learning and social science at the high school.

The tie to business and community with the school is strong in Calexico. The school-to-career area and future international programs with Mexico, such as a Business Mural Project, are currently being developed.

Examples of the impact of Calexico's initiatives are reflected in the **dropout rate**, which is well below the state average for the state generally and for Hispanics.

Calexico:	1995	2.4%
State:	1995	4.4%
State Hispanic:	1995	6.4%

Text was supplied by staff members at Calexico Schools and printed in ***Partnership Progressions***, newsletter of the National Assn. of Partners in Education (newsletter published at $100 a year by NAPE at 901 N. Pitt Street, Alexandria, VA 22314).

Photo Credits

Addresses for photographers whose work we are using in Vol. 19, No. 3:

Robert Finken is a freelance photographer based in Richmond, Virginia (11016 Ashburn Rd., 23235). Call him at 804-320-1489 for special assignments.

Geri Kody can be contacted at Clark County Schools (4212 Eucalyptus Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89121), 702-799-5442.

Michael Siluk lives and works from New Brighton, Minnesota, (1000 3rd St., NW, 55112). His phone number is 612-636-5843, and he is available for assignments.

They can supply a variety of photos for review and publication on a one-time basis for fees to be arranged depending on the nature of the use.

1998 *Journal* Editorial Review Board

Larry Ascough, Elgin, IL,U-46 Schools

Don Bagin, Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ

B. Dean Bowles, University of Wisconsin

Patrick W. Carlton, Polytechnic Inst., St. University, VA

Carolyn H. Chapman, Univ. of Nevada, Reno

Marsha Chappelow, Blue Valley Schools, Overland Park, KS

Judith Cochran, Wright State University, OH

Floyd Coppedge, State Secretary of Education, OK

Larry E. Decker, Florida Atlantic University

Don Gallagher, professor emeritus, Rowan University

Mel Heller, Loyola University, Chicago

Anne L. Jefferson, University of Ottawa

J. William Jones, PECO Energy Co., PA

Theodore J. Kowalski, Ball State University, IN

William Allan Kritsonis, Lake Charles, LA

Tami James Moore, University of Nebraska, Kearney

Donna M. Schmitt, Eastern Michigan University

I. Sue Shepard, Southeast Missouri State University

Harriett Stonehill, Megaskills Education Center, Washington, DC

Arthur W. Stellar, Kingston Schools, NY

Jaclynn C. Tracy, E. Michigan University

Philip T. West, Texas A&M

Brenda Williams, College of William and Mary, VA

Guidelines for Submission

Relations—The Journal of Educational Relations

A refereed journal--scholarly articles by academic/higher education authorities are refereed by an international editorial review board. The *Journal* also accepts articles by practitioners and administrators in basic (K-12) education and journalists at large.

Scope

Articles are sought on topics such as internal communication and climate, employee motivation, parent involvement, partnerships, working with the news media, community participation, audits, surveying and polls, community service programs for students, communication training, advisory committees, volunteers, writing and speaking, publications, alumni associations, foundations, mentoring, photography, and related topics.

The overall goal of the *Journal* is to support efforts to enhance/foster student achievement and staff productivity, and to provide information to build public knowledge of the value and potential benefits of a sound basic education of our youth. We advocate the concept that the school public relations function must be based on fact and reality as compared to ideals and goals of educators and the community at large.

Style

Scholarly articles can be prepared following style guidelines of the publication manual of the American Psychological Association, **with these exceptions:**

1. **Do not** place last names of authors being cited and the year *within* the text. Number citations sequentially in the text; provide usual citations in **references following the article**.

2. Before the start of the article, include a summary of the scope and major findings of the article in one paragraph.

We encourage you to include photographs, drawings, and tables as appropriate.

Submissions

- Submit four copies of a manuscript with a letter from the author(s).
- Articles should be 1,000 to 3,500 words in length.
- If produced on a computer, supply a disk, clearly labeled, in ASCII format, IBM format only, with the text copies.
- Include an abstract of the article and a two-three sentence credit for each author on a separate sheet.
- Advise if the article has been published or is being considered elsewhere.
- Queries for articles on specific topics are welcomed.
- SASE. Include a #10 self-addressed, stamped envelope for acknowledgement of receipt of your article. Include a 9" x 12" similar envelope for reply to submissions or queries.
- Response to an article or a query is usually conveyed to an author within 60 days.

Address manuscripts and correspondence to Albert E. Holliday, Editor and Publisher, *Journal of Educational Relations*, 1830 Walnut St., Camp Hill, PA 17011. 717-761-6620.

Previous *Journals* are available in microfilm from University Microfilm Int., 300 Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Refer to *Journal of Educational Communications* (1975-83), *Journal of Educational Public Relations* (1984-95) and *Journal of Educational Relations* (1995-).

Albert E. Holliday, Editor-Publisher
Journal of Educational Relations
P.O. Box 657
Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #152
Camp Hill, PA 17011

Universal Accreditation for NSPRA professionals?

Officials of the North America Public Relations Council have asked the board of the National School Public Relations Assn. to drop its accreditation program. In its place would be a Universal Accreditation program, open to any who practice "public relations."

School communicators may wish to consider a few questions before deciding to support this change:

1. Are the goals/purposes of business and education like enough that the same approach to public relations would be appropriate?
2. Could a business PR professional cross over to a school position and do equally well?
3. Could the public interest—that of ensuring student achievement at the highest level—be served by a program that has *image* and *profits* as central focal points?
4. Are the strategies used in business public relations to promote goodwill and sales complementary with those used in education used to convey information and involve people?

Members might want to tell their NSPRA board representative their own reactions to the proposal before the board acts.

Albert E. Holliday
Publisher

The Journal of Educational RELATIONS

PS 027224

126

Promoting student achievement through positive school-home-community relationships Vol. 19 No. 4, 4th Quarter 1998

The Other Kind of School

Until now, we have not covered the community education topic. Larry Decker, one of the nation's authorities on it, provides an overview of schools in which the scope of concern of the board and staff extends not just to K-12 grades but to lifelong learning and community residents of all ages.

We live in an era when the very legitimacy of public education is being questioned. We think it is appropriate to review a setting in which "education" is embraced as an essential element of the common good for all the citizenry.

What Is the Self Image of People in Schools?

Two features in this issue deal with the learning/working climate in schools. One author calls attention to the need for boards and administrators to give priority to a school system's internal audiences. The other author provides a detailed how-to plan to assess a school's climate and take steps to enhance it.

Charity begins at home, the adage goes. In like manner, reputation starts there too. Each school employee and student (and the student's family) comes in contact with 10 to 20 "outside" people in a week's time. If these "internal" audiences have had excellent and generally positive relations in schools, they will tend to reflect those experiences to people in the community. (Don't even consider what happens when people have been slighted, put down or wronged–they love to tell others and think what that does to an organization's reputation.)

Our Reprint Policy

We grant blanket permission to people who may wish to make photocopies of *Journal* articles in these cases:

- A subscriber at a school, or a school district with 5,000 enrollment or lower, for distribution to staff.

- A subscriber who teaches courses in school-community relations or school PR, for use by students.

- Editors with whom we have a publication exchange arrangement.

In all cases, we require a credit line, with the reproduced material, that includes the author's name and affiliation and Reproduced from the *Journal of Educational Relations*, published quarterly at Box 657, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657.

Al Holliday

P.S. In reference to the Other Kind of Schools above, one could wonder how advocates of using public funds for private schools (K-12) are being received in states in which community schools are popular. And one could also ask if support for public education in Michigan, Minnesota and the five other states where community schools are most numerous is statistically any different than in states with traditional K-12 operations. We would welcome citation of studies or reports that touch on these issues.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Vol. 19, No. 4
4th Quarter 1998

Cover photo by
Robert Finken,
Richmond, VA

Inside Front Cover — **Editor's Column**

5 — **School Emergencies**—What CEOs must do so school staffs/families are prepared. *By Shulamit Lewin.*

8 — **School Climate Has a Major Impact on School Improvement**. *By M. Scott Norton.*

13 — **Conduct a Climate Audit**—Identify the plus and minus factors of the school's learning-working atmosphere. *By Jim Ellsberry.*

21 — **Community Education.** A concept of learning/enrichment for those aged 4 to 94. *By Larry E. Decker.*

28 — **Research**—How Does Communication Rate When Superintendents Rank Imperative Skills? *By Elmer J. Ireton, Ben Wilson Jr., and James A. Wood.*

33 — **Books.** *Edited by Arthur W. Steller.*

Inside Back Cover — **Guidelines for Contributors**

Back Cover — **Paragraphs for your Perusal**

Subscription Service:
questions,
renewals,
new orders,
change of address,
Call toll-free:
800-537-2624.
Outside U.S.
(717) 766-0574
EDITORIAL CALL:
(717) 761-6620

RELATIONS-The Journal of Educational Relations—ISSN 0741-3653
Editor-in-chief: Albert E. Holliday
Associate Editor: Joan M. Holliday
Book reviews: Arthur W. Steller
Case studies/Research: Philip T. West

The Journal of Educational Relations is published quarterly by the Educational Communication Center, Box 657, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657. Telephone 717-761-6620.
Copyright 1999.
Subscriptions: Individual rate, $48 per year. Single copy, $15. Library rate, $60 per year. Single copy, $20. Add $4 for subscriptions outside of the United States. Payment in U.S. funds.

Periodicals postage paid at Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Journal of Educational Relations*, P.O. Box 657, Camp Hill PA 17001-0657.

Children are like audio-mirrors. They reflect and play back everything they have seen and heard

Al Holliday

School Emergencies

What CEOs Must Do So That School Staffs, Families Are Prepared

by Shulamit Lewin

Editor's note

The number one obligation of a school board and its employees is not to educate students. It is to keep students healthy and safe from harm.

Of all policy manuals school officials must oversee, the primary one must deal with safety/health considerations and what employees should do in an emergency or disaster.

In addition to printed guidelines (that are known to the staff and families), one back-to-school workshop for all employees ought to be devoted to specifics of dealing with such problems.

This article addresses these issues in an excellent manner. I recommend that school CEOs reproduce it for distribution to principals and unit managers for their use.

—**Albert E. Holliday**

Families send children to school every day with the hope that they will come home healthy and safe. Despite these wishes, each year more than 13.5 million children are seen in emergency departments as a result of injuries, according to the Center for Violence and Injury Control. he Children's Safety Network estimates that 10 to 25 percent of all injuries to children occur in and around schools. Medical complications due to chronic illnesses such as asthma and school-wide emergencies such as fires are other types of safety issues that children, schools and families face as potential emergencies each day.

Every school district develops its own policies and procedures for school emergencies. According to Hiroshi Nakajima, former director general of the World Health Organization, "More schools than ever before are considering whether their policies, practices and overall organization contribute positively or negatively to the health of students, teachers, families and community members." At the national level, an interagency commission on school health has recently been formed to address the need for comprehensive school health programs.

Questions for School Staffs/Parents

•How can family members and teachers create a safe and healthy school environment for children?
•What should parents look for and ask about before sending children to school?
•What should teachers and other school personnel do in case there is an emergency at school?
•Are there plans in place for getting medical attention to an affected child in the most efficient manner?
•Finally, what plan is in place to help prevent injuries from occurring at school?

These are questions to which families need answers in order to ensure that they are informed and prepared.

Be Prepared

How do families and school prepare for school emergencies? The first step is for school administrators to design an official, publicly available emergency plan for the school. This should be done with help from fire department, police department, emergency medical services and other health providers. Families also should be included in this process so that the specific needs of their children can be met. The purpose of an emergency plan is to make sure that proper timely care is given to an injured child.

Families need to ask questions, identify potential dangers, and be knowledgeable about the kind of emergency care plan that exists at their school. If a child has special health care needs, such as epilepsy, what plan has been developed to direct care for that child in case of a medical emergency? Taking a look at the school **before** a child attends school can help families learn about the potential risks and health benefits to the child's life that exist at the school. Families and teachers have the ability to be both advocates for and partners in children's health and safety.

Design a plan

In addition to escape routes in case of a fire, disaster, or other situation that requires evacuation of the building, it is also important to develop a comprehensive emergency plan including provisions for children who have special needs and are more prone to a medical emergency.

Next, a decision should be made as to where that information is kept, who at the school will track this information and finally, who should be able to access this information. All teachers who are in contact with a child with special health needs should be aware that there is an individualized emergency plan already established should there be a medical emergency.

Some school officials have developed very restrictive policies that designate the school nurse or principal as the only person allowed to dial 911; other policies require that families be contacted first; others are more flexible. Making the connection with EMS prior to an emergency will help school

School Emergency Preparedness Checklist

Each school unit should have the following:

✓ 9-1-1 calling policy
✓ First aid training for staff, teachers and students
✓ Emergency care plans for children with special health care needs
✓ Policies for common emergencies
✓ Disaster plan
✓ Violence prevention/conflict resolution program
✓ Playground safety assessment
✓ Collaboration between school personnel, families and community EMS providers regarding school safety

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

officials become more familiar with what will occur if EMS is called and will enable EMS to learn about the special concerns of the staff. Once the plan has been developed, it should be shared with all school personnel and families, with regular review and revision.

Consider First Aid Factors

The school emergency plan must deal with not just policies that direct proper use of EMS and dialing of 911, but also training in first aid and CPR. Knowing who in the school is trained in CPR and first aid can help prevent further injury to a child if there is an emergency. Frequently the school nurse, if there is one, is knowledgeable in CPR and first aid. Training additional school personnel such as athletic coaches, teachers and secretaries as well as the students themselves is crucial should a school nurse, for example, be unavailable during the emergency.

Children with special health care needs are frequently more prone to injuries and illnesses, depending upon their medical condition. The term "Children with special health care needs" can include those with acute or chronic illnesses, birth-related conditions, or long-term consequences of traumatic injuries. Emergency care plans must take into consideration these students' needs. When developing Individualized Health Plans for these children, an emergency care plan should be included. The IHP should be maintained as confidential information but be accessible to those who may need the information (i.e., the school nurse, EMS) so that proper care can be given as quickly as possible.

Prevent Injuries From Occurring

Knowing what to do in case of an emergency can help save lives and prevent disability. In addition to understanding the emergency plan, working on preventing emergencies from occurring in the first place is also important. Guidelines and standards for school environments, including playground and recreational equipment, should be reviewed for safety and kept updated. An assessment of the safety of the playground layout, equipment and surfacing can help ensure a healthy and safe play environment. School bus and pedestrian safety are also essential issues to address since many injuries occur between school and home.

Parents and school staffs also need to look at ways to prevent violence and to promote nonviolent conflict resolution. Gun violence, unfortunately, has become a danger in many schools. According to a study conducted by the Children's Safety Network in 1996, 10 percent of school-related injuries result from violence. Development of official school policies, implementation of violence prevention programs, and education in conflict resolution strategies can help prevent injuries due to violence from occurring, and reduce the fear that children, parents and school personnel may feel.

Children are precious. They are our future. Parents send children to school to learn and develop academically, physically, socially and emotionally. As families strive to create a safe environment for their children at home, so too can families, school personnel and health providers strive to develop a safe and healthy environment for children at school.

Shulamit Lewin, MHS, is the state outreach coordinator for Emergency Medical Services for Children National Resource Center, 11 Michigan Ave. NW, Washington, D.C., 20010. (301) 650-8026. This article is reprinted from *Our Children*, the national PTA magazine, published monthly at $25 a year at National PTA, 330 N. Wabash Ave., Suite 2100, Chicago IL 60611-3690.

School Climate Has A Major Impact On School Improvement

by M. Scott Norton

A school climate that enhances human performance is a necessary condition for excellence to occur. School leaders must work to develop shared goals, gain a positive self-image for the school, initiate programs to encourage personal growth, stimulate ideas for improvement, develop a flexible structure of operation, invest in problem-solving efforts and implement effective personnel policies.

In every sense, schools are people. School outcomes are people outcomes. School achievements are people achievements. And, school relationships are people relationships.

I define the term *school climate* as the collective personality of a school or school system. It is the atmosphere created by the social and professional interactions that take place within the school/community. Thus, climate consists of the relationships in any situation as these are experienced by people in the situation.[1]

Of course, no one would argue for a less than positive school climate or contend that relationships among school personnel and the school's stakeholders are not important. But, why is the climate of the school such an important consideration?

For one thing, many research findings point to the importance of interpersonal relationships in affecting an individual's development and behavior.[2]

There are several other reasons why climate is an important consideration:

1. Effective communication in organizations necessitates a climate of trust, mutual respect and clarity of function. Thus, a healthy school climate enhances the chances that communication within the

system **will be heard and internalized**.

2. The kind of climate in the school sets the tone for the human relationships that must take place within it. A healthy climate is important in the development of **positive self-concepts**, meeting student and staff needs and lends positively to the resolution of the inevitable problems that schools encounter.

3. School climate tends to either enhance or inhibit human growth and development. A healthy climate fosters the kind of **growth needed for school renewal** and for keeping the school alive and vital.

4. Climate sets the tone for creative human performance. The stimulation and motivation of people are conditioned to a great extent by the school climate that exists. Work, mutual respect, honest communication and continuous growth opportunities are instrumental in assuring the **personal incentive** needed for student and employee achievement.

5. Climate is important in that a positive environment implies "teamness." Positive school relations are essential for **gaining the cooperation** necessary for accomplishing significant goals.

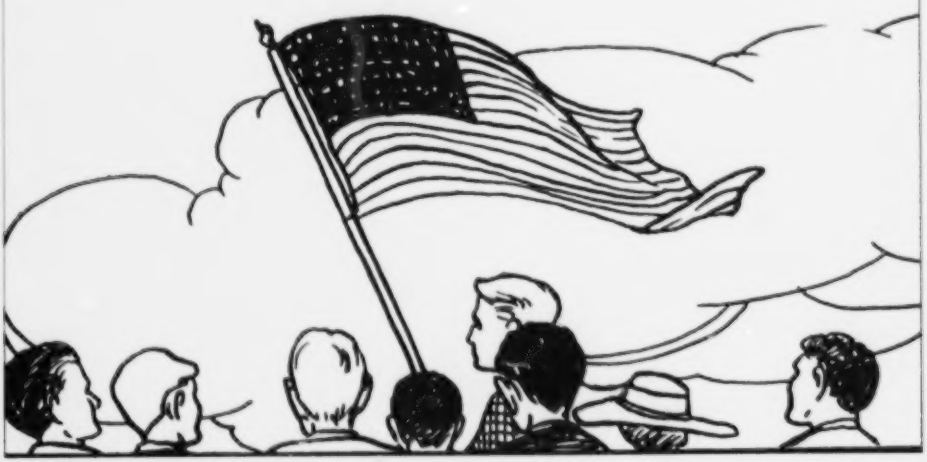
The crux of the matter is that school leaders must not only understand the importance of school climate in the achievement of school goals, but must also be willing and able to assess the schools' climate and set forth procedures for improving it as necessary. "The importance of the climate can hardly be overstated, for the school's climate as it is experienced by each child has a powerful impact upon the formulation of a child's concept of self, his ability to work effectively and his capacity to develop mutually satisfying relationships with others," according to C.A. Newell.[3]

How School Climate Influences School Outcomes

According to several research studies, school climate holds significant implications for such considerations as school reform, creative performance, teacher absenteeism, student achievement and other school conditions.

For example, Christian[4] found a significant positive relationship between openness of the school's climate and the rate of introduction and use of innovations in the school's program.

Eisenberg[5] and others found that employees who believed that the organiza-



School Climate Survey (for use by Teachers in a School)

Directions: As you read each statement, circle the number that best describes how you feel as a teacher about your school. Do not circle more than one number for each statement.

Value of the number: 1) strongly disagree 2) disagree 3)neutral 4) agree 5) strongly agree

A. SCHOOL ATMOSPHERE/MORALE

1. Our school has a friendly atmosphere.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Our school is an excellent place to work.	1 2 3 4 5
3. Teachers in our school are usually happy.	1 2 3 4 5

B. TEACHER/ADMINISTRATOR RELATIONSHIPS

1. Administrative support for teachers is high.	1 2 3 4 5
2. The principal is seen as an effective leader.	1 2 3 4 5
3. Teachers and administrators work cooperatively.	1 2 3 4 5

C. PEER RELATIONSHIP

1. Personal interactions among teachers are positive.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Teachers in our school get along well together.	1 2 3 4 5
3. New teachers are made to feel welcome and a part of our school.	1 2 3 4 5

D. WORKING CONDITIONS

1. I am assigned to my teaching areas of expertise.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Resources needed for effective teaching are adequate.	1 2 3 4 5
3. Workload for teachers is fair and equitably assigned.	1 2 3 4 5

E. TEACHER ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

1. Teacher absenteeism in our school is not a problem.	1 2 3 4 5
2. School policies and regulations are fair.	1 2 3 4 5
3. School policies and regulations are followed by teachers in the school.	1 2 3 4 5
4. Teachers in the school are supportive of the school's	1 2 3 4 5

tion valued their well-being tended to be absent less often than others. And studies by Patrick, Taylor and Tashakori, and Hoy and Miskel[5] support the fact that school climate directly influences the job satisfaction of the teaching staff.

Certain Practices Improve Climate

Improving the climate of a school is not an easy task. However, research and empirical evidence do suggest certain practices that tend to foster positive school growth and renewal.

The practices summarized below are based in part on a discussion of school climate that appeared in Norton and Kelly's text *Resource Allocation.*[6]

Schools with open and positive climates have leaders and educators who:

•Have developed a set of shared goals

Teachers Can Assess School Climate

As research evidence supports the influence of the school principal on the school's environment, various attempts to measure climate have tended to focus on principal-teacher relationships.[10] Thus, climate assessment instruments, such as Halpin and Croft's Organizational Description Question-naire, called OCDQ[11], and the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire, called PTO,[12] focus on relationships that exist **between teachers and the school principal**.

The OCDQ provides a description of the type of climate in the school, one of six types ranging from *open* to *closed*. It can also provide norms that describe group and leader characteristics.

An *open climate* is described as one in which the school staff's morale is high, the staff works well together, it enjoys friendly relations but does not engage in a high degree of socialization. The staff possesses the incentive to work things out and to keep the school moving in a positive manner.[13]

On the other extreme, a *closed system* marks a situation in which the group members have little satisfaction relative to task achievement of social needs. The teachers are not engaged in "meaningful" work and do not work well together. Thus, group achievement is minimal.

More recently, revisions of the OCDQ have been designed for specific use at the elementary, middle and secondary school levels. The PTO provides climate norms that can be compared with other schools in the system and with national norms in such areas as teacher rapport with the principal, the status of teachers, relationships among teachers, and teacher satisfaction.

In many cases, school leaders can assess conditions through the use of locally designed instruments. Such instruments gain the perceptions of students, staff and others about school conditions and the quality of interpersonal relationships that exist in the school. The instrument shown in the chart is such an example. Such instruments can provide immediate feedback to help answer the question, "How can you tell if your school's climate is positive or not?" However, one limitation of these is that they generally do not have local, state or national norms for comparative purposes.

The example that follows is suggestive only and is not presented as a complete, comprehensive assessment instrument. However, an analysis of the Likert-type responses such as those used in the example can provide insight for school leaders. They can learn the general condition of the school's climate and the need for an extensive follow-up assessment of condition regarding existing and/or potential problem areas. ☙

that guide the school's program activities and help determine how the resources of the school will be allocated. School goals are unique to the specific school and reflect the beliefs and values of the cultural setting in which the school is embedded.

•Have worked to establish a worthy self-image and one that is inclusive in its treatment of all individuals. Each person is prized for the unique contributions that the person might make to the important objectives of the school. A positive, open climate is one that assures the importance and dignity of each individual in the school/community.

•Focus on the continuous personal growth of all the school's members by encouraging personal initiative and effective self-evaluation activities that lead to self-improvement.

•Establish systems for soliciting the suggestions and ideas of all individuals in the school/community. Each idea submitted is evaluated on its own merit rather than the particular source from which it came.

•Exemplify flexibility in structure and programming. Such questions as "What would happen if we tried a different approach?" or "Might there be a better answer than the one that we have accepted?" are part of the school's evaluative procedures. A "risk-free" climate is open for individuals and

groups who are willing to experiment with new ideas under controlled conditions, to try new approaches, and invent creative solutions without fear of failure.

•Have invested in a fact-founded approach to problem solving. It is not that experimentation is not rewarded, but such efforts are planned and controlled so as not to cause injury to programs or clients. Staff members have developed a posture in that research is part of their decision-making process. Research is conducted by the staff and results are made known to the staff.

•Involve a variety of stakeholders in the development and implementation of personnel policies. Such policies set guidelines to enhance a program of effective human resources in the school system and provide an effective plan for the recruitment, selection and use of quality staff.

Research and practice in the area of school climate make it clear that one of the most effective ways to improve the performance of students and professional staff in a school setting is to improve the school climate. As schools are people, the interpersonal relationships within the system are of paramount importance for bringing about a climate that serves to support and enhance the performance of all people in a school.

Effective school leadership requires attention to both the internal and external relationships of the school. The development of a positive school climate necessitates full attention to those practices and provisions that foster open, positive school environments.

M. Scott Norton is professor in the Division of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, College of Education at Arizona State University (P.O. Box 872411, Tempe, AZ 85287-2411).

References

1. Newell, C.A. (1978). *Human Behavior in Educational Administration*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
2. ibid., p. 170
3. ibid., p. 171.
4. Christian, C.F. (1972). *Organizational climate of elementary schools and the use of innovative educational practices*. Unpublished dissertation, University of Nebraska.
5. Eisenberg, R.G., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. (1986). Perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71(3), 500-507.
6. Patrick, J.E. (1995). *Correlations Between Administrative Styles and School Climate*. EDRS, accession number Ed 387853.
7. Taylor, D.L., & Tashakori, A. (1994). *Predicting Teachers' Sense of Efficacy and Job Satisfaction Using Climate and Participatory Decision Making*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association, San Antonio, Texas.
8. Hoy, W.K., & Mishkel, C.G. (1996). *Educational Administration: Theory, Research and Practice* (5th ed.) New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.
9. Norton & Kelly, op. cit., pp. 152-153.
10. Norton, M.S., & Kelly, L.K. (1997).*Resource Allocation: Managing Money and People*. Larchmont, N.Y.: Eye on Education.
11. Halpin, A.W., & Croft, D.B. (1963). *The Organizational Climate of the School*. Chicago: Midwest Administration Center, The University of Chicago.
12. Bentley, R.R., & Rempel, A.M. (1970). *The Purdue Teacher Opinionaire*. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University.
13. Halpin & Croft, op. cit.

Conduct a Climate Audit

Identify the Plus and Minus Factors of the School's Learning-Working Atmosphere

By Jim Ellsberry

People have a strong sense of their environment. There are places and cultures that are inviting. There are others that seem imposing. Some may be perceived as ominous; some may appear to be frivolous. The point is, we are quick to form opinions about people, places and cultures.

With respect to our schools we've all made comments such as, "That's a great school." Or someone might say, "This is a friendly place." Or, conversely, someone might say, "They don't really care about kids. " Or we might hear, "I don't like it there; I feel so out of place."

Nearly all parents want their children to succeed in school; they want their schools to be safe places, where adults care about, and are concerned with, the specific needs and potential of each child...especially their own! Surely, in many places, parents must be frustrated by a lack of information about the climate for learning in their schools. How would parents know if their child's education were at-risk because of negative, cynical, or apathetic attitudes toward learning? Aside from gossip and rumor, how do we go about assessing, evaluating or judging the climate for learning within a specific school?

One way to assess climate is to conduct an audit of a school. The audit is a process in which the people in a specific school/community have a formal opportunity to reveal their attitudes, beliefs and opinions about the learning-working climate of the school. The people to be included in the audit would be representative samples of the school's staff, students, their parents and patrons generally in that school's immediate community.

A climate audit is not about the physical temperature of the building. It is a formal means, a systematic process, for uncovering feelings about how things are being perceived and, as the adage says, "Perception is reality."

The Purpose and Process of an Audit

The climate audit serves as a data-gathering tool to involve people in the process of identifying important targets for improvement. Here are some essential points about it.

1. The climate audit is a systematic process for identifying attitudes, opinions and beliefs that individuals perceive

to be true about the school. One's beliefs don't always match the facts. The audit helps measure how closely aligned people's beliefs are with actual data. It can also help align intentions with actual results.

2. People are interviewed in sample groups of similar people to minimize exaggerations of the facts, to cut down on the intimidation factor and to neutralize personal agendas.

3. Audit information is collected in personal group interviews rather than collecting information via written questionnaire, because the interviewer can ask for elaboration, clarification and specific examples to support opinions. Also, one can observe body language, hear the intonation of voices and respond to reactions.

4. The validity of the report will depend on:

- How accurately the sample groups represent the actual school/community population,
- How forthright people are in expressing their attitudes, opinions and beliefs,
- How accurately the interviewers hear and record the data that is expressed,
- How precisely the interview team can synthesize the data that is collected, and
- How skillfully the writer of the report captures the collective mood of the stakeholder groups.

How to Conduct a Climate Audit

Decide on Scope/Purposes

A variety of people can generate the sense that improvements in a school are warranted. A principal, for example, may come to believe that the time is appropriate for an examination of the school's learning-working atmosphere.

The principal would then need to consult with district officials and perhaps others to discuss purposes, goals and expectations of a audit. One would need to have approval of audit topics, a timetable, a budget as necessary and assignment of responsibilities as the initial steps.

Select the Audit Leader

The audit leader should be an "outsider," one who doesn't live or work in the immediate school/community, to ensure a neutral approach.

The leader could be an educator or administrator (working or retired) in a neighboring district. The leader could be a nearby principal, who would exchange for services of this local principal as audit leader next year.

One could also consider contracting with the state school boards' or administrators' association or a college of education, who may have experts who conduct such studies. In some regions, specialists operate communication-management firms and work in this area.

Once the decision is made to conduct an audit, a meeting of the school site coordinator and the leader is held to exchange information about roles, goals and expectations. These decisions define the responsibilities of school staff to prepare for the audit team's visit and those responsibilities assumed by the team leader. Depending on circumstances, this discussion might require an actual meeting between the parties, or often it can be done via phone, fax and/or mail.

Select Team Members

Depending on the size of the school(s) involved, 10-20 or even more people will need to be involved as interviewers. They will also participate in writing the overall report. As much as possible, these people also should be outsiders (if only to assure the integrity of their observations in the final report that well may deal with extremely sensitive matters).

Team members could come from: A class

"The climate audits were great for district level and building level goal setting. We identified some common concerns that were expressed throughout the district and these became the focal point for district goals. The other issues that were unique to specific buildings were left for them to use as discussion points for possible improvement goals. Having parents and community people involved in the process provides a sense of shared ownership."

Bill Roberson, Superintendent, Mooresville Community School Corporation, Mooresville, IN

of students at a nearby university, or staff members of a citizens' advisory committee in a nearby school where a similar study will be conducted soon. Retired educators in the surrounding area may be willing to volunteer (especially if lunches and an end-session recognition dinner are included). As a last resort, consider using those on substitute teacher lists at nearby districts, paying them regular day rates for substitutes.

Specify Responsibilities

A. The **site coordinator** is usually the school principal. This person's tasks include:

- •Informing faculty, students, staff and parents of how, when and why the audit will take place.
- •Identifying and confirming those who will be interviewed as part of the data gathering process.
- •Scheduling times and spaces for those to be interviewed.
- •Arranging for breaks, meals, materials, etc., associated with the schedule.
- •Deciding on the scope of the questions to be asked.

B. The **audit leader** is responsible for:

- •Discussing all relevant details of the process with the site coordinator.
- •Putting together the audit team (size of team depends on the size of the school).
- •Arranging a team meeting at the site prior to the actual interviews.

C. **Team members** jobs include:

- •Conducting the interviews, synthesizing the data, and writing the report.
- •Participating in any follow-up meetings with appropriate groups depending on local needs. (Faculty, staff, parents, board of education, etc.)

Decide on Topics and Questions

Audit questions should be as open-ended

Ensuring Positive Action

It isn't uncommon for people to participate in activities only to be disappointed in the outcome because the actual results failed to match the expectations they had going in. If parents, for example, believe they will have access to the complete report and then find at the end they get only an executive summary, this can result in hard feelings and the sense that something is being kept from them.

To keep this kind of situation from occurring it is important for the principal to be specific with the various stakeholder groups about what their roles will be in the process, and how the results will be used. Being open about the purpose of the audit and how it will be used builds trust.

Sample Audit Questions

- When you think of school what is it that makes you proud?
- What is it that is taught here that is really important...valuable enough to last a lifetime?
- What is it that people value in this school?
- How do you find out what goes on around here?
- How do people treat one another in this school?
- In what way are people rewarded and/or made to feel special here?
- What is one thing that teachers do that really helps you (your child) to learn?
- What do you believe is the most significant challenge facing this school?
- In what way does the staff try to make this a safe and secure place for students?
- In what way does the staff best prepare students?
- What is the most outstanding feature of this school?
- What ideas do you have for improving our school?

Obviously, there are many questions that could be asked. In all cases, educators are invited to create their own list. Try to limit questions to six, depending on the group, for the average interview group. Probe for specifics and examples.

as possible. This allows information to be generated with honesty and integrity because people aren't being unnecessarily biased by questions that lead them in specific directions. For example:

When you think of (name of school), what is it that makes you proud? What is it specifically you take pride in?

The questions direct people down a positive path of thinking, but that's intentional. It's easy to get the negatives, and unless you make a specific effort to direct people in a positive way at the beginning, you never hear anything but the negative. The question, however, is open. *Opinions, beliefs,* and *attitudes* must emerge from the minds of those being interviewed. One should avoid asking questions that can be answered *yes* or *no*, such as "Are you proud of the school's athletic program?"

Another example:

What is it that is taught in this school that is valuable and important?

Again, this forces people to generate responses drawn from their own perceptual base. This kind of question results in information that has a different quality than if one would ask: *Do you believe the math program at this school is adequate to prepare students for high school?*

In conducting audits, we have discovered that often parents, teachers and students will not begin this discussion with content subjects such as math, language arts or science. More often than not, they talk about "hidden curriculum." These are lessons that are taught about respect: respect for self, for others, for property; and being accountable for one's choices. This curriculum is not written in most schools; it is not taught through formal lessons. But when it is "taught" successfully, everyone knows about it.

Other examples of questions:

How do you find out what goes on around

here? (Gets at the effectiveness and the efficiency of communications within the school and community.)

If anyone around here does an excellent job, or gets better at what they do, who knows? Who cares? What is it that gets recognized? (Gets at the formal and informal system of rewards and incentives...who receives recognition and who doesn't.)

How do people get along together in this school? (Gets at relationships between students and teachers, administrators and teachers, adults to students, students to students, adults to adults, etc.)

What are some effective ways that teachers help their students to learn? (Gets at the variety of instructional methods used to address the diverse needs of students.)

If you had a magic wand to wave, and could grant your school one wish that would make it even better than it is, what would your wish be? (Guaranteed to bring out any concern that hasn't already been dealt with.)

Select People to be Interviewed.

To be certain that results represent the responses of all the people in the target groups (parents, staff, students, patrons), one must either interview all in each group, or a random sample from each. In most cases, one will deal with random samples, which requires selecting every 10th or 20th, etc. person from a master list; the "nth" number will depend on the size of the sample desired. (**All** of those selected **must** be interviewed for a valid result. If persons 10 and 50 on the list are unavailable, then go back and pick the 9th or 11th/49th or 51st, etc. people to fill out the total number of the sample.)

For a large group, say 400 parents (including all spouses), a sample of 80 or 20 percent would be reasonable. For a small group, say 35 staff members (which would include teachers, counselors, support staff, custodial staff, cafeteria and bus staff, visiting specialists, etc.) one might need to involve from half (of 15 teachers) to all (of 1-2 drivers or clerical, etc.). All groups in a school must be represented in the interviews for validity.

Conduct Interviews

Working with the site coordinator and staff, the team members conduct interviews in small groups, or individually as may be the case (with the only secretary at the school, for example). The interviews should be conducted within a narrow time period, say one to two weeks. Questions should be printed two or three to a page, with liberal space for comments and observations of the interviewer.

"Participating in a climate audit is a wonderful experience because you have the opportunity to match you own experiences and perceptions with those of other parents. When you read the report and participate in discussions leading toward improvement, you feel that you've made an important contribution to the school."

Lee Ann Bear, Parent, Indianapolis, IN

" For us, the climate audit provides a valuable supplement to Indiana's Performance-Based Assessment requirements and for certification by the North Central Association of Secondary Schools. The audit is focused on the emotional factors, the feelings that people have about our school. It's important that we understand what our students, parents and staff are perceiving. "

Dr. Bull Duke, Principal, Carmel High School, Carmel, IN

Collect all Data and Write the Audit Report

At this point, the audit leader meets with the site coordinator and team members to organize the data into a useful report.

The report is usually organized into five major sections. In each section the data from the interviews are synthesized to reflect a general consensus of the perceptions of those who participated in the process.

Section I: Strengths

In this section are described those aspects of the school that people believe to be the quintessential strengths that give the school uniqueness. Usually all the stakeholder groups interviewed must agree that the strengths are the roots of their pride in the school community. These strengths are not arranged in any particular order of priority.

Often in this category one will find opinions, attitudes and beliefs highlighting the positive qualities of the student body, or of the faculty and staff. Instruction, curriculum, and student activities are often celebrated as sources of pride and within the past few years, the use of technology is more commonly found under this heading.

Section II: Detractors

In this section are those points that emerge from the audit process as being the issues keeping the school from being the best it can be. These points reflect perceptions, attitudes and beliefs that are expressed repeatedly throughout the audit. As a result, a kind of general consensus evolves upon which key points in this section are developed.

Among the detractors, one would usually find matters related to communications, discipline, lack of clear priorities and the obtrusive interventions of state and/or federal bureaucrats.

Section III: Discrepancies

This section of the report identifies those elements of the school culture that some groups believe to be a source of strength and pride while other groups perceive them to be less than adequate. As has been stated earlier, this is about attitudes, opinions and beliefs. As it has been shown in many cases many times, "truth" is a function of one's point of view.

It is not uncommon to find references to the effectiveness of administrative leadership, the role of parents as partners in the process of education, indicators of student success and achievement and the current state of physical facilities listed under discrepancies.

Section IV: Observations Generally

The power of the audit report is to organize information and put in an assessment format. Evaluators can then see to what extent the intended image of the school aligns with goals and mission as perceived by its stakeholders.

Those within that school community—parents, educators, students and patrons—are usually best prepared to determine what use should be made of this information. For these reasons the audit team–composed of "outsiders"–rarely makes specific suggestions **about what should be done**. However, in those rare situations, in the absence of leadership, where nearly everything seems to have broken down, the audit team can take the lead in providing action steps toward improvement.

Having made this mild disclaimer, the team leader accepts the responsibility for recommending how the report may be used effectively to bring about positive change. The leader consults with the site coordinator as appropriate, and at this point, the data collection part of the audit is concluded. The team leader and members are thanked and recognized for their efforts.

Convert the Audit Report to Action

Now the site coordinator has the complete report of the audit team. The immediate task is to translate those observations/comments into a plan of specific action steps to meet the objectives of this whole assessment project.

1. Read, React, Decide

Assemble a group from among those who participated in the audit interviews and include some who didn't. Ask them to read through the report. (You might consider two or three teachers, two or three members of the support staff, two or three parents and you might think about students who have the maturity to be effective contributors.) Let this cadre be your "executive" committee

Suggest to the group that they take notes or highlight points in the report as they read. The purpose is to individually find the ideas that one believes are worthy of further study or analysis.

Once enough time has passed to allow for a thorough reading, call the group together and synthesize its collective thinking into priorities for further action. Categorizing the points of emphasis into three groups might do this: 1. Things we **must** act on. 2. Things we **could** act on if time an money would permit. 3. Things **not worth** acting on. (Because we don't have the resources, we can't control the outcome, and/or it simply isn't worthy of our time and energy.)

The site coordinator, and perhaps a staff member should write an executive summary to focus on main points only, as well as selecting certain comments or observations to put in a highlights section.

2. Distribute the Report

Decide who needs to receive a complete copy of the report, who needs an executive summary, and which audience needs only brief highlights. Develop a plan to inform the faculty, staff, students and parents, the school board and the community-at-large. Ask for input; invite people to suggest ideas from their respective viewpoints about which issues ought to be addressed for further discussion and planning for action.

3. Determine the Priorities

Allowing adequate time for people to share their reactions, if any, then move ahead. Enlist the help of the executive committee to determine which of the issues is worthy of action. It is important to have a clear reason, and rationale, why this matter justifies the time and attention it will require. In the absence of a compelling purpose, people will see this as one more thing

that has to be done when they see their "plate" is already full!

4. Assemble Follow-up Teams

In the event issues are identified that deserve further study or action, ask for five to seven volunteers who would be interested in working on each issue. Get as broad a representation of the school community as is practical on each action team.

5. Establish the Parameters

Give the follow-up teams clear, unambiguous directions about the task. For example: The *goal* is to...the *results* should...the *time line* is...this much *money* is allocated for...something you *cannot do* is...In other words, these become the parameters for decision making. It is counterproductive to ask a group to do anything without first clearly spelling out for them your expectations and the limits they have to work within. Answer the questions, "Is the resulting plan a decision to act, or is it a recommendation to someone else who must give permission to act?"

6. Develop a Plan

If anything is going to happen as a result of this report, someone will have to do something. Improvement is not a passive process. It ought to be completed within the guidelines and parameters established by those who ordered it. If the follow-up team has authority to implement its plan, it should be explained to the appropriate audiences. If it is a recommendation, it should be presented to the group (or individual) that is authorized to approve or deny its completion.

7. Celebrate Your Successes

The audit report provides an incentive to seize the window of opportunity for improvement. But equally important, it is a format for identifying and publicizing the outstanding features of the school and community. Recognize the school's strengths and do so with enthusiasm and pride!

Conclusion

The audit process affords parents and patrons an opportunity and format to be active participants in the assessment of their local schools. The impact is even greater when district officials decide to involve all schools because what evolves are improvement issues that can cut across all schools for district-wide improvement.

Jim Ellsberry is president of the DeWitt Institute for Professional Development, a consulting firm located at 8808 S. Slevins Dr., Prince's Lakes, IN 46164. 317-933-3365. He wrote *The Learning Unlimited Program* (to help students "at risk") that appeared in Vol. 18, No. 2 of this journal. He has developed the climate audit program, as described in this article, for use in school systems and individual schools.

References

1. Boyer, Ernest L. *The Basic School: A Community for Learning*. The Carnegie Foundation, Princeton, NJ, 1995.

2. Brandt, R. (Editor) *Creating a Climate for Learning, Educational Leadership*, Alexandria, VA, September 1996.

3. Glassman, P. and Roelle, R. *Putting Your Community in Focus, The American School Boards Journal*, May 1995, pp. 42-43.

4. Kelley, Edgar. *Improving School Climate: Leadership Technique for Educators*, NASSP, Reston, VA, 1980.

5. Manning, M.L. and Saddlemire, R. *Developing A Sense of Community in Schools, The Bulletin*, NASSP, Reston, VA, 1996, pp. 41-48.

6. Senge, Peter, et. al. *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building A Learning Organization*, Doubleday, New York, NY, 1994, pp 502-504.

7. Storer, J.H., Licklider, B., and Cychosz, C.M. *Perceptions of Educators and Parents: Where They Disagree Causes Conflict, The Journal of Educational Relations*, Camp Hill, PA, December 1996, pp 2-5.

Community Education—

A concept of learning and enrichment for those aged 4 to 94, with profiles of community schools.

by Larry E. Decker

At the heart of the community school concept is a simple idea: schools are not just places to teach children, but learning centers for everyone in the entire community.

Genuine community schools are not limited by traditional school schedules and roles, as they are focused on the needs of the community. They are for use beyond the traditional K-12 program. They provide academic, extracurricular, recreation, health, social service and workforce-preparation programs for people of all ages.

Community schools are designed to involve a broad range of community residents, and representatives of public and private organizations, and local, state and federal agencies. Community school staff members try to use all available community resources–including the resources of the school–to meet the needs of the community and invite community members to be both teachers and learners. They offer learning and enrichment opportunities for residents of all ages, educational backgrounds and socioeconomic levels, including those who have special needs. Community schools become places where people gather to learn, to enjoy themselves and to become involved solving the problems of the community.

Intent of Community Schools

By providing *diverse educational services*, C.S. help meet the lifelong learning needs and wishes of community residents and the skill needs of local employers. School-based child care services help parents who lack access to private child care services. Community schools help bring the concept of "everyone learns, everyone teaches" close to reality by tapping the abundant expertise that exists in any community.

Keystones of the Concept

By promoting **interagency cooperation** and **public-private partnerships**, officials of community schools help the people in communities reduce duplication of effort and increase overall effectiveness. Business and private agency operators may provide services that are not affordable in a tax-supported budget. And school leaders, in cooperation with other community agencies, may address community problems that adversely affect educational attainment as well as the community's business environ-

ment and quality of life.

Through **community improvement** efforts, members of the community may become involved in improved education and recreation services as well as beautification and recycling projects, making the community attractive to both current and prospective residents and business people.

Through **citizen involvement**, the process of community problem solving is moved close to the people who understand the problems best and are most likely to identify effective solutions.

When a broad range of **community resources** is used for learning, the importance of the role of the community in the process of educating the citizenry is acknowledged. Young people learn from, and with, community elders, and, in turn, teach them. Schools become places where learning and living meet.

Evolution of the Concept

The community school concept has been evolving over hundreds of years. In America, it has roots in the first common schools in the New England colonies. In fact, the Massachusetts Act of 1642 decreed using education to fulfill " a society's need." The public school model advocated by Thomas Jefferson provided diverse educational opportunities over a wide variety of learning experiences. The Neighborhood Settlement movement headed by Jane Addams at the turn of the century promoted a non-school based initiative.

For many of today's advocates, the evolution of the modern community school concept is typified by the history of the Flint, Michigan, Community School Program. Community schools were established in Flint in the depths of the Depression, when Frank Manley, a high school physical education teacher, convinced Flint philanthropist Charles Stewart Mott that it would be better for city kids to be playing *inside* the school fence after school, on weekends, and in the summer than just hanging around *outside*, on the streets. In 1935, Mott gave the school district $6,000 to keep five schools open all summer "to provide wholesome family recreation." The Flint schools are still open, and the Mott Foundation in Flint is active in supporting selected school systems that offer community education.

Flint is now an urban area with a population of 150,000 and 25,000 K-12 students. All 44 schools have designated community school sites. Some 34,000 residents participate in programs and activities sponsored in the Flint Community Schools. Their focus is on parent involvement, academic support, health, school safety and neighborhood rejuvenation. Teams involving many community agencies and organizations deal with teen pregnancy, parenting skills, HIV-AIDS education and neighborhood improvement. Public educators in Flint are trying, through school-community programs, to address some of the broad societal problems that inevitably get in the way of the schools' primary mission of educating the community's children.

Portraits of Community Schools

The National Center in Community Education provides resource material on three models of these schools—a typical school district, an urban school and an agency model. Following are descriptions of several programs, as prepared by the NCCE staff:

Birmingham, Alabama, Community Schools

Community schools were inaugurated in the early 1970s. The urban district has a population of 266,000 with a school enrollment of 42,000. The school district's annual community school budget was $1,505,000

(34% from school district funding and 66% from the City of Birmingham) at last report. Ten of 50 elementary schools, one of 19 middle schools, and six of 10 high schools are identified as community schools. In addition there is one full-time community education center.

Officials in the Birmingham school system began exploring the possibilities of developing such a program in 1966-67 when a group visited Flint. A pilot community school was established in 1971. In 1973 the City of Birmingham adopted a funding formula for community education wherein the Mayor and City Council provide two-thirds of the program cost through the city's general fund budget, and the Birmingham Board of Education provides one-third. These funds are used for core community school staff, salaries, supplies and publications. All additional staff must be paid from class fees, grants, or other sources.

The Birmingham Board of Education chose not to make every school a community school. Rather, the board decided to staff community schools scattered across the district so that every citizen of Birmingham has fairly easy access to one of them. Each community school staff has the responsibility of providing learning opportunities to meet the needs and interests of the community it serves.

BCS extends the use of school facilities to the community for meetings, programs and various activities. Through efforts with agencies and organizations, a wide range of classes and activities is provided for all ages, from preschoolers to senior citizens. The staff address such issues as homelessness, illiteracy, poverty, youth at risk, crime, teen parenting, substance abuse and unemployment. A link with a human services agency makes counseling, health services and employment preparation available at the school site.

West Philadelphia Improvement Corporation.

This urban community school project was inaugurated in 1986 as a collaborative between the West Philadelphia Improvement Corporation and the University of Pennsylvania. The corporation project is working in four elementary, three middle and two high schools.

The program is coordinated by the West Philadelphia Partnership composed of institutions (including the University of Pennsylvania) and community groups. Other partners include the Philadelphia School District, unions, churches and city, state and federal agencies and departments.

WEPIC's goal is to create university-assisted, staff controlled and managed, comprehensive community schools. In these schools, students advance in their skills through service to their school, families and community. University students and faculty are engaged in academic work that requires the development and application of knowledge to solve problems and reflect on their own service experience.

This is a year-round program involving 4,500 children, their parents and community members in education and cultural programs, recreation, job training, community improvement and service activities. The program includes evening and weekend, extended-day and school-day programs. The evening and weekend programs offer a wide range of educational, cultural and recreational classes for children and adults. Community councils provide guidance on program content. Classes are taught by public school teachers, community members, and Penn staff and students.

The academic work by Penn students done with these schools is based upon a community-oriented, problem-solving approach. That is, schools should function as the agents for community transformation.

The motto for St. Louis Park Public Schools, Minnesota, is *Education for Everyone*. The staff in the system's community schools offer classes for resident adults, and collaborate in partnerships such as with the city nature center, whose specialists teach and help students appreciate gardening techniques.

The Countee Cullen School and Community Center.

This urban school is located in a New York Harlem community and is one of 18 Beacon Community Schools developed by Rheedlin Centers for Children & Families. Using schools as a community resource, Rheedlin officials have developed a network of school-based prevention programs providing families and youth with services that keep young people in school while enhancing their intellectual, social and emotional development. Rheedlin program directors and social workers take an active advocacy role in community redevelopment. They work in housing, public safety, public schools, community parks and playgrounds, the feeding program for the young and elderly, and emergency food and clothing for clients.

Countee Cullen operates every day and night of the year at P.S. 194. Its goal is to increase the incidence of positive outcomes among the neighborhood's young people. Its mission: to build a community that strengthens families, offers personal support to the youngsters, and provides opportunities for them to develop social and vocational skills.

Core funding for Countee Cullen is provided through the New York City Department of Youth Services as a part of the Mayor's Safe Streets, Safe City Initiative. Funding through the New York State Division for Youth has supported youth development and recreational leagues. Attendance monitoring and academic enrichment are provided through the support of the New York City Board of Education. As a result of its innovative design, the Countee Cullen Beacon has been awarded foundation and private sector support.

Highlights of Other Community School Programs

In the early 1970s, **St. Louis Park, Minnesota, Public Schools** officials

declared their schools as community schools. From the inception, the program has been funded by the City of St. Louis Park and the St. Louis School District. The school board adopted a mission statement 26 years ago when the K-12 student population was about 10,000: our schools, the board said, will become the community's "cornerstone of lifelong learning." Today, about 43,000 St. Louis Park learners of all ages are involved–at all hours–in such non-K-12 programs as early childhood and parenting education; pre-school and school-age child care; youth services (development, conflict management, enrichment, volunteerism); and adult services (literacy, senior citizen activities, enrichment, college credit and disability services). Adult volunteers serve as year-round career and personal mentors to K-12 students, and routinely provide enrichment activities in the K-12 classroom.

Another variation on joint funding is a school-county partnership in **Gloucester County, Virginia**, where a Community Education Department functions as part of the county government in cooperation with the public school system. Department staff coordinate the use of school facilities and provide more than 80 hours of weekly supervision at six community school sites. The Gloucester Resource Council is a network of human service agencies and community organizations whose representatives plan together and coordinate services. A community resource guide, community beautification, and an adult literacy/GED program are products of the county-school district cooperation.

The **Dade County, Florida, Public Schools**–the fourth largest school district in the country–serves more than 333,000 students from more than 100 nations. To enhance the school learning environment and improve academic achievement, the district is restructuring its schools into "neighborhood learning centers" for learners of all ages and backgrounds. The vehicle for this ambitious undertaking is the Dade *Community Education Network*. In 1996, 69 county schools–elementary, middle, secondary and post-secondary–were formally designated community schools and awarded school banners with a distinctive logo. Some of the schools have been designated "full service" schools because they house local branches of health and social service agencies. Nearly all the elementary and middle schools offer structured after-school recreation, academic and enrichment programs. Several outreach programs are offered at senior centers and other special non-school locations.

In **Arlington Heights, Illinois**, the community school program has grown in 10 years from about 9,000 participants in continuing education programs to almost 60,000 adults of all ages. The program features 70 school-community partnerships.

In **Bayonne, New Jersey**, the community schools program features computer labs and school gyms, plus a swimming pool, running track and ice arena for year-round community use. Residents may attend an adult high school; the school is operated during evening hours and graduates are awarded state-recognized high school diplomas.

Commonalities Among Community School Programs

These descriptions illustrate the diversity that exists in community school programs. But they all have elements in common. All offer community residents of all ages and representatives of community agencies and institutions, including schools, the opportunity to be active partners in addressing educational issues and community concerns.

They are all based on six principles:

- **Self-determination.** Local people have a right and a responsibility to be

involved in determining community needs and identifying community resources that can be used to address these needs.

• **Self-help.** When people assume responsibility for their own well-being, they build independence and become part of the solution.

• **Leadership development.** The training of local leaders in skills as problem solving, decision making and group process is an essential component of successful self-help and improvement efforts.

• **Institutional responsiveness.** Public institutions, including educational institutions, exist to serve the public and are obligated to develop programs and services that address continuously changing public needs and interests.

• **Integrated delivery of services.** Officials of organizations and agencies that are operated for the public good can meet their own goals and best serve the public by working closely with organizations with similar goals.

• **Decentralization.** Services, programs and other community involvement opportunities that are close to people's homes have the greatest potential for high levels of public participation. Whenever possible, these activities should be available in locations with easy public access.

A Response That Works

During the 1990s, we have seen the problems in many communities become complicated and intractable. This is a troubling trend that requires solutions now. Community schools are not the "cure-all," but they can be of great help. The community school can be the support center for a whole network of agencies and institutions committed to addressing local needs and expanding learning opportunities for all residents.

I contend that community school programs work because parents and other community members become involved in efforts to improve students' academic achievement and climate for all in the school. These schools are places in which community members can educate themselves and improve their own skills and talents. Successful community schools are based on respect for the diverse needs, interest and interrelationships of people in their community. Community members have a place to meet, talk through issues and work together to address problems.

Community schools provide opportunities to discover and nurture the public leadership needed to sustain healthy communities and a responsible citizenry.

Larry E. Decker holds the Charles Stewart Mott Professorship at Florida Atlantic University (College of Education, Rm. 260) P.O. Box 3091, Boca Raton, FL 33431. ldecker@acc.fau.edu. 561-367-3599

Editor's Notes

Sources of Information

- The National Center for Community Education, 1017 Avon St., Flint, MI 48503. www.nccenet.org. 313-238-5651. Ask for the publication *Community Schools Across America* (free) and for the centers list of other resource publications.
- The National Community Education Assn., 3029 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax, VA 22030. 703-359-8973. ncea@ncea.com. *Creating Learning Communities* by Decker and Boo is offered at $2.95. Ask for the NCEA publication list.
- Larry E. Decker's text, *Home-School-Community Relations* is an outstanding reference, in the opinion of the *Journal* editor, for community school advocates and for school-community relations specialists. $19.95 plus $1.95 shipping. Order from Decker at the Florida Atlantic University address.

To accomplish great goals, start with small achievements.

Anon.

Superintendents Rank Imperative Skills—

Where Does Communication Rate?

By Ben Wilson, Jr., Elmer J. Ireton and James A. Wood

In a study conducted in 1996 by Ireton, Wilson and Wood, "Imperative Skills For The Superintendency: A Comparative Study," Texas superintendents ranked 12 identified skills in order of importance. The pertinence of communication permeated each of the factors.

The study was conducted with the following survey instrument, which was sent to 200 Texas superintendents selected at random (128 responded).

A brief discussion on the importance of communication as it relates to each of the recognized factors follows.

Imperative Skills For Success In The Superintendency

Directions: Please rank the following factors in relation to your perception of importance with one (1) being the most important and twelve (12) being of least importance.

Factor	Rank Order
A. Finance and budget development skills	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
B. Overall knowledge of curriculum	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
C. Human relations dealing with external publics (outside the school system)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
D. Knowledge of building programs	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
E. Skill in operating transportation systems	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
F. Human relations in dealing with internal publics (school district personnel)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
G. Skill in promoting effective staff development	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
H. Effective use of personnel by delegating responsibilities	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
I. Motivates personnel toward professional self-improvement and advancement	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
J. Skills necessary to relate positively with the board of trustees	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
K. Skill in developing a framework for evaluation of programs and personnel	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
L. Possesses and reflects acceptable ethical practices	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Ranked in order of priority, respondents listed the following as important skills required of the superintendent:

1. Possesses skills necessary to relate with the board of trustees
2. Possesses human relations skills in dealing with external publics
3. Possessed human relations skills in dealing with internal publics
4. Effectively uses personnel by delegating responsibilities
5. Has knowledge of and reflects acceptable ethical practices
6. Motivates personnel toward professional self-improvement and advancement
7. Possesses finance and budget development skills
8. Possesses skill in operating transportation systems
9. Possesses skill in promoting effective staff development
10. Possesses skill in developing a framework for evaluation of programs and personnel
11. Has knowledge of building programs
12. Has overall knowledge of curriculum

The 12 factors had been selected by the authors as representing the primary organizational responsibilities of today's chief executive of public schools. Note that the practicing superintendents chose as their three most important factors ones that deal primarily with human relations and people skills.

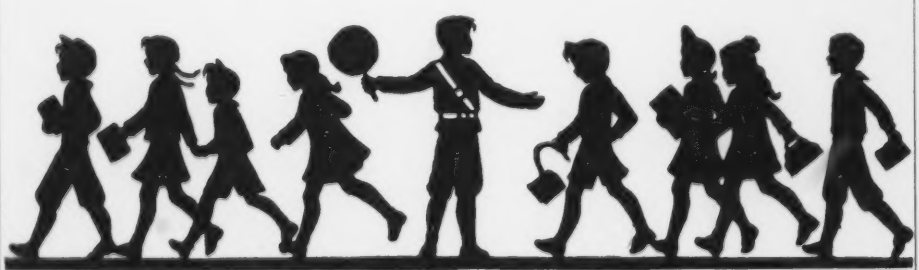
As all 12 require attention to clear communication and articulation with the board, staff and the district's many publics, following are our observations of communication elements of each.

Possesses Skills Necessary to Relate Positively With the Board of Trustees

A human relations challenge is the one requiring successful superintendents to relate positively with the board of trustees. Boards must be kept informed and have a sizable amount of confidence in what the superintendent says and does. Board members who feel that they have not been kept informed will not work as well together as a board that feels good about the work being done and the context in which the work occurs. Boards need to possess the attitude that the decisions that are made contribute to success at all echelons of the school district.

Human Relations Dealing with External Publics

The superintendent is the primary representative or voice of the school district. The CEO is responsible for communicating to and with the public on all matters of district operation. The superintendent and staff can perform these tasks in a number of ways including the use of publications, cooperation with local media, through partnerships



and coalitions, parent involvement programs and other processes. In all ways, effective communication is a vital factor in developing excellent public relations, understanding and support. If languages other than English are prominent in the community, efforts should be made to communicate school-related messages to those groups as appropriate.

● Human Relations in Dealing With Internal Publics (school district personnel)

Communication skills are a vital component in the process of getting along personally and professionally. Messages should be clear and transmit accurately the thinking of the superintendent. This is indeed an important consideration in maintaining excellent relationships with internal publics.

● Effective Use of Personnel by Delegating Responsibilities

The old adage 'one person can't do it all' is indeed applicable when discussing the works of the chief executive officer of a school district. It is absolutely essential that this person be able to delegate responsibility. This is best accomplished through the art of clear, deliberate communication.

● Motivates Personnel Toward Professional Self-Improvement and Advancement

Motivating personnel toward self-improvement is an area wherein skillful human relations is necessary and advantageous to the accomplishment of the goal of advancement in the profession. This is necessary for the professional improvement of the superintendent as well as for the staff. Even though professionals may feel that each individual should be self-motivated, the superintendent is responsible for widespread motivation of all persons in the district, both certified and non-certified.

● Finance and Budget Development Skills

It is important for the superintendent to get as much input as possible on finance and budget from those who will be directly involved in putting it together as well as implementing it. The superintendent needs to communicate the goals and objectives of the school board to all those entities. With the impetus today on site-based management, which involves input of teachers and parents as well as administrators, the superintendent needs to be adept at working with many different groups of people. The role of the superintendent in finance and budget has changed significantly in many districts. The superintendent has become more of a process facilitator and public relation figure. The chief executive must explain the process to those involved as well as the budget and finances to the school board, principals, teachers, staff and the public. The superintendent also needs the technical vocabulary and understanding of budget and finance to fulfill this obligation or duty.

● Skill in Operating Transportation Systems

The chief executive in many school districts is accountable for the effectiveness of the public school transportation system. Given this important task, it is imperative that the superintendent have intricate knowledge concerning all aspects of this service and have the ability to articulate same to appropriate audiences.

● Skill In Promoting Effective Staff Development

The ongoing outcry for quality staff development has no end. New ideas, innovations, new techniques, and the overall concept of newness continues to dominate the halls of academic thought when it comes to remedy. The superintendent must serve as a clearinghouse of the materials

that inundate the central office. The professional occupying this top position must be able to sort out the important from the fanciful and clarify what is appropriate for local situations.

● Skill in Developing a Framework For Evaluation of Programs and Personnel

Developing and orchestrating the evaluation of programs and personnel requires a particularly high degree of positive human relations skills. Evaluation has historically been one of the weaknesses of public school administration partly because many of the things being evaluated are rather nebulous and difficult. The successful superintendent will convey the message that evaluation is needed for the improvement of the total school enterprise.

● Knowledge of Building Programs

The superintendent should be knowledgeable of building use, availability and space. If new structures are needed for growth or if crowding already exists, it is the role of the superintendent to sell the idea for the need to the school board and to the public who would have to pay additional school taxes to raise the money.

A well-designed, long-range building program, communicated to the public and duly approved by the board, will help ensure positive relations with the community.

● Overall Knowledge of Curriculum

The superintendent, to make informed decisions, needs to be knowledgeable about all programs. The district leader is the person ultimately responsible for all programs in the school district and would be the person primarily responsible for defending the program to the school board and public. The superintendent could also push for eliminating a program if it was not needed. In this effort it is vital that this intent be articulated to the public.

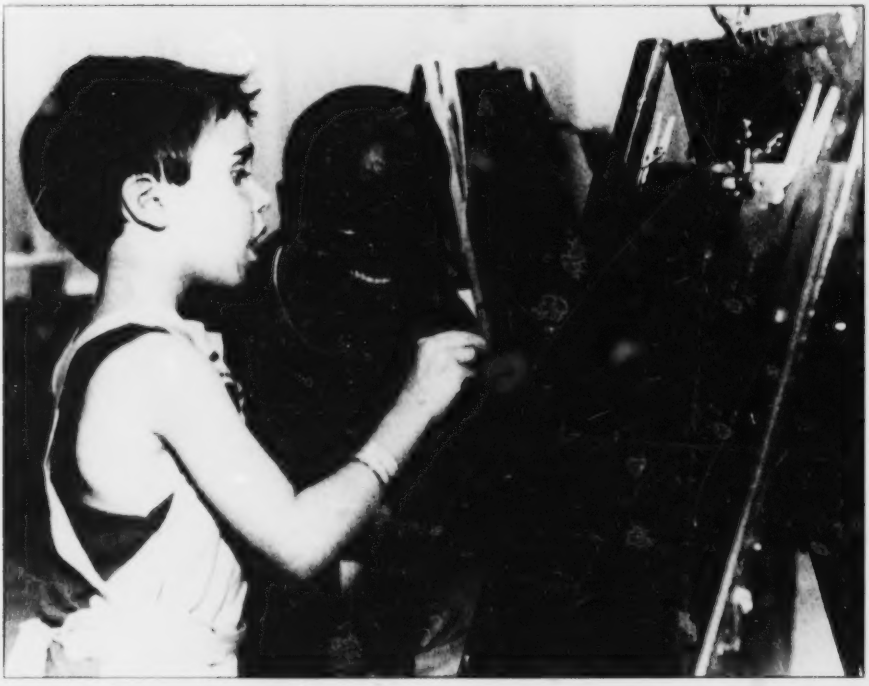
Ben Wilson, Jr. is professor in the department of education, Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College (400 Sul Ross Drive, Uvalde, TX 78801. 210-278-3339, ext.104). He is a licensed counselor and has served on a local school board.
Elmer J. Ireton is associate professor at Sul Ross. He teaches the graduate course in school-community relations at the University.
James A. Wood is also associate professor at Sul Ross. He has been a program development specialist and student teacher professor.
All three have been public school teachers and administrators and have earned doctorates.

References

Ireton, E., Wilson, B., & Wood, J. (1996). *Imperative Skills for Success in the Superintendency: A Comparative Study*. Uvalde, Texas; Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College, Department of Education.

No matter what happens, someone will find a way to take it too seriously.

Dave Barry, Syndicated Columnist



There are obviously two kinds of education: one should teach us how to make a living, and the other how to live.

James Truslow Adams (1878-1949)

Book Reviews

by Arthur W. Steller

Books for review and requests to serve as guest book reviewer may be sent to editor Arthur W. Steller, Superintendent of Kingston City Schools, 61 Crown St., Kingston, NY 12401

How to Think Like A CEO: The 22 Vital Traits You Need to Be the Person at the Top.

By Benton, D.A. Warner Books, Inc., 1271 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020. 1996.

The title of this work suggests that the book is about preparing for becoming chief executive officer for a business. But that's only one audience; current CEOs will also gain from the contents and another group able to benefit are those who work particularly close to CEOs. In both the business world and the field of education, this latter category would include communications and public relations officials.

According to the author, "If you understand how the chiefs run the show:

- You'll avoid getting fired.
- You'll get promoted more quickly.
- You'll enjoy the quality of work life you want and deserve.
- And–if you do decide you want to be the Big Boss someday–you will have the right equipment."

The impact of the person in the top position of an organization is viewed as being highly significant. "Despite how high up you are or how far away from your level they are, a CEO's personality, character, drive and spirit will affect you now and in the future."

The author conducted her research with some of the top CEOs in the country. She states that some of the 22 desirable traits of a CEO are: Feels secure in self; improves continuously; deals honestly; thinks before talking; is original, tenacious and publicly modest; keeps aware of style; acts gutsy, humorous and a tad theatrical; is detail oriented; fights for her/his people; admits mistakes; is straightforward, inquisitive, competitive and flexible.

Benton stresses that, "The CEO's job is to sell all the time...to the board, employees, customers, public, and news media." Thus, public relations is seen as a key component of what assists the organization to move forward.

In a section on "Personal PR," the author advocates managing an ongoing *personal* public relations campaign for visibility and credibility. The means for achieving these ends are also applicable to education.

While this text was written for people in business, the advice carries over to education. Many people in the educational profession could benefit from some of these ideas, especially if they work for someone with lengthy tenure. Most of the 22 traits have relevance to school community relations and communications officials. This book is recommended for those who want to be at the top of their field, regardless of whether they strive to be a CEO.

Success Is a Choice: Ten Steps to Overachieving in Business and Life.

By Pitino, Rick. Broadway Books, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1540 Broadway, New York, NY 10036. 1997.

"If you can't communicate with people, you have dramatically narrowed your chances for success."

This statement could have come straight from a publication like the one you are now reading. Instead it came from Rick Pitino, one of the most respected basketball coaches in the country.

Coach Pitino writes that he began studying communication "ever since I knew I wanted to one day be a coach." He listened to tapes of effective speakers like Martin Luther King, Jr., and John F. Kennedy, as well as entertainers and other coaches. As a motivational speaker now, he frequently gives presentations to Fortune 500 companies.

More important than being able to wow large audiences is communication one-to-one. The former instance is rendering a performance, the latter is building a relationship through trust and listening. "The correct ratio should be somewhere in the vicinity of four to one: Listen four times more than you speak. Use that as a basic rule of thumb and you're heading in the right direction." Rather than thinking of what you're going to say, make "eye contact, which not only is courteous, but gives the person with whom you're speaking the sense that you truly care about what he or she is saying to you. Making eye contact develops trust."

Besides communication, Pitino writes about building self-esteem, setting demanding goals, being positive, establishing proper habits, learning from role models, thriving on pressure, being persistent, learning from adversity, and surviving success.

Success is a Choice is quick, entertaining reading, full of cliches, sports anecdotes and some basic truths about achieving.

Dartnell's Public Relations Handbook, 4th Edition.

By Dilenschneider, Robert, Ed. Dartnell Corporation, 4660 N. Ravenswood Ave., Chicago, IL 60640-4595. 1996.

Dartnell's Public Relations Handbook has been a staple for professionals in public relations since the late 1960s; this latest edition is completely revised and updated. Useful as a comprehensive guide for both beginners and seasoned professionals, it is a reference and/or textbook.

The new aspects of this handbook are attributable to Robert Dilenschneider who has had a tremendously productive career. He served as CEO of Hill and Knowlton for a time and, in 1991, formed his own public relations firm. He has handled cases like the Three-Mile Island nuclear accident and the Kansas City Hyatt disaster. These experiences explain the chapter titled "Thinking the Unthinkable–Crisis Communications."

The 465-page handbook is so crammed with content that it is difficult to choose the sample item that might be of most benefit to an individual public relations practitioner. New PR strategies are treated on matters such as staffing and budgeting, measuring PR results, relating to the press, trade publications, investor relations, the annual report, keeping employees informed, op-ed's and related pieces, speechwriting, and positioning public relations with management.

This is one of those books that should be on the shelf of every public relations professional who occasionally turns to the written words of others for advice or for a quote.

The Role of State Departments of Education in Complex School Reform.

By Lusi, Susan. Teachers College Press, 1234 Amsterdam Ave., New York, NY 10027. 1997.

In the United States, the education of citizens is legally a state function, yet there has been little written about the important role of a state department of education. The material in this book is based upon the author's research into two states that were judged to be engaged in major school reform–Kentucky and Vermont. These in-depth case studies demonstrate a state's role in policymaking and implementation. Author Lusi pulls the curtains aside for you to understand a great deal of what a state department of education does.

She interviewed over 200 people onsite and presents anecdotal reports, theories, other research and studies. The result is a solid addition to the field of education.

While there are other viewpoints that could be considered when evaluating a state department of education, the author notes: "The changes I expected to find in my study fall along five broad parameters, each with a number of dimensions:

- •Changing Substantive Work
- •Building Organizational Capacity
- •Increasing Organizational Flexibility
- •Building Local Capacity and
- •Developing Collaborative, External Connections."

Complex school reform puts tremendous pressure upon a state's department of education. The ambitious nature of Kentucky's and Vermont's reforms are especially noteworthy. Critics can find plenty of "mistakes," since new approaches and methods are always risky. The department of education officials of these two states are pioneers whose adventures and misadventures in managing education are documented in this book.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

High Visibility: The Making and Marketing of Professionals into Celebrities

By Rein, Irving, Philip Kotler & Martin Stroller. NTC/Business Books, NTC/Contemporary Publishing Co., 4255 W. Touhy Ave., Lincolnwood, IL 60646. 1997.

This revision of *High Visibility* offers updated anecdotes, more examples and some changes to the principles of marketing applied to professionals. The earliest edition was a landmark piece for the field; this version carries on that fine tradition. School public relations readers who have experience outside of education will find this book more familiar than readers whose careers have dealt solely with education.

The latter individuals will find Chapter Two, "The Visibility Premium," enlightening. In older cultures, only military generals, religious leaders, royalty, or various heroes known for their merits were celebrated; "...they understood...that images and symbols had power, and they employed them effectively to exert control over their publics." Now, the marketing of persons "...has become a viable commodity all by itself. It is an entity that stand apart, independent of accomplishment, sacrifice or heroics."

The book defines a celebrity as "...a person whose name has attention-getting, interest-riveting, and profit-generating value." Celebrity status carries with it a pay differential or premium beyond what a non-celebrity can earn. While the earning power generally refers to individual income, it can also mean the ability to raise money or gain attention for charities and nonprofit organizations as well as businesses.

From "Sculpting the Image" to "Sustaining Celebrity," this book covers the entire spectrum. Many of the stories are of national figures, although the same techniques on a different scale are relevant within a local community.

High Visibility is highly recommended.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A Guide to Today's Educators:

Keep parents informed. What they know can't hurt you.

Alice Healy Sesno
Secrets for Protecting Self and School
Corwin Press

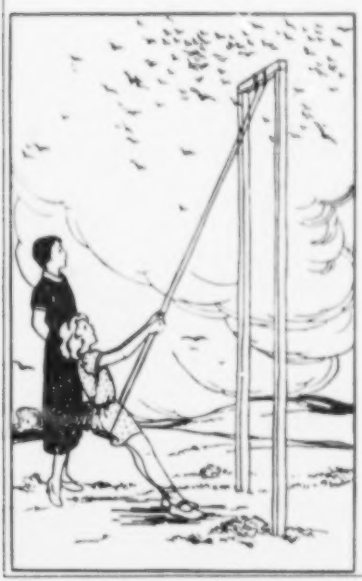
Photo Credits

Addresses for photographers whose work we are using in Vol. 19, No. 4

Robert Finken is a freelance photographer based in Richmond, Virginia (11016 Ashburn Rd., 23235). Call him at 804-320-1489 for special assignments.

Dale D. Gehman lives and works from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, (1540 Zarker Rd., 17601-5051). His phone number is 717-396-8972.

They can supply a variety of photos for review and publication on a one-time basis for fees to be arranged depending on the nature of the use.



1998 *Journal* Editorial Review Board

Larry Ascough, Elgin, IL,U-46 Schools

Don Bagin, Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ

B. Dean Bowles, University of Wisconsin

Patrick W. Carlton, Polytechnic Inst., St. University, VA

Carolyn H. Chapman, Univ. of Nevada, Reno

Marsha Chappelow, Blue Valley Schools, Overland Park, KS

Judith Cochran, Wright State University, OH

Floyd Coppedge, State Secretary of Education, OK

Larry E. Decker, Florida Atlantic University

Don Gallagher, professor emeritus, Rowan University

Mel Heller, Loyola University, Chicago

Anne L. Jefferson, University of Ottawa

J. William Jones, PECO Energy Co., PA

Theodore J. Kowalski, Ball State University, IN

William Allan Kritsonis, Lake Charles, LA

Tami James Moore, University of Nebraska, Kearney

Donna M. Schmitt, Eastern Michigan University

I. Sue Shepard, Southeast Missouri State University

Harriett Stonehill, Megaskills Education Center, Washington, DC

Arthur W. Stellar, Kingston Schools, NY

Jaclynn C. Tracy, E. Michigan University

Philip T. West, Texas A&M

Brenda Williams, College of William and Mary, VA

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Guidelines for Submission

Relations—The Journal of Educational Relations

A refereed journal--scholarly articles by academic/higher education authorities are refereed by an international editorial review board. The *Journal* also accepts articles by practitioners and administrators in basic (K-12) education and journalists at large.

Scope

Articles are sought on topics such as internal communication and climate, employee motivation, parent involvement, partnerships, working with the news media, community participation, audits, surveying and polls, community service programs for students, communication training, advisory committees, volunteers, writing and speaking, publications, alumni associations, foundations, mentoring, photography, and related topics.

The overall goal of the *Journal* is to support efforts to enhance/foster student achievement and staff productivity, and to provide information to build public knowledge of the value and potential benefits of a sound basic education of our youth. We advocate the concept that the school public relations function must be based on fact and reality as compared to ideals and goals of educators and the community at large.

Style

Scholarly articles can be prepared following style guidelines of the publication manual of the American Psychological Association, **with these exceptions:**

1. **Do not place last names of authors being cited and the year *within* the text. Number citations sequentially in the text; provide usual citations in references following the article.**

2. Before the start of the article, include a summary of the scope and major findings of the article in one paragraph.

We encourage you to include photographs, drawings, and tables as appropriate.

Submissions

- Submit four copies of a manuscript with a letter from the author(s).
- Articles should be 1,000 to 3,500 words in length.
- If produced on a computer, supply a disk, clearly labeled, in ASCII format, IBM format only, with the text copies.
- Include an abstract of the article and a two-three sentence credit for each author on a separate sheet.
- Advise if the article has been published or is being considered elsewhere.
- Queries for articles on specific topics are welcomed.
- SASE. Include a #10 self-addressed, stamped envelope for acknowledgement of receipt of your article. Include a 9" x 12" similar envelope for reply to submissions or queries.
- Response to an article or a query is usually conveyed to an author within 60 days.

Address manuscripts and correspondence to Albert E. Holliday, Editor and Publisher, *Journal of Educational Relations*, 1830 Walnut St., Camp Hill, PA 17011. 717-761-6620.

Previous *Journals* are available in microfilm from University Microfilm Int., 300 Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Refer to *Journal of Educational Communications* (1975-83), *Journal of Educational Public Relations* (1984-95) and *Journal of Educational Relations* (1995-).

Albert E. Holliday, Editor-Publisher
Journal of Educational Relations
P.O. Box 657
Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #152
Camp Hill, PA 17001

Paragraphs for Your Perusal

People who work with children are the most practical people in the world. We don't have lofty, esoteric, hypothetical discussions about the future. **When the bell rings, the future walks into our classrooms and takes a seat.** I can tell you its name in alphabetical order. **We look into the eyes of the future everyday and it makes us fighters,** because we know–in real terms–what's at stake.

Lily Eskelsen, teacher, Utah *NEA Newsletter*

When I visit workplaces in America, I administer the "pronoun" test. I ask workers a few questions about the organization. If the answers I receive describe the organization in terms like "they" and "them," then I know its one kind of organization. If the answers are put in terms like "we" and "us," I know its another type.

Robert B. Reich, Former Secretary of Labor

Six-year-old Jake had difficulty saying *thank you*. I repeatedly met with Jake to rehearse when to say *thank you*. I would open my office door for Jake and say, "What do you say?" After a time, Jake would blurt out, *thank you*, and so it went until he returned from a classroom party, favors in hand. "Jake," I said, "Did you say *thank you* to your teacher when she gave you your party treats?" "No," Jake replied. "She didn't ask me, 'What do you say?'"

Richard Lodish
A Child in the Principal's Office, Corwin Press